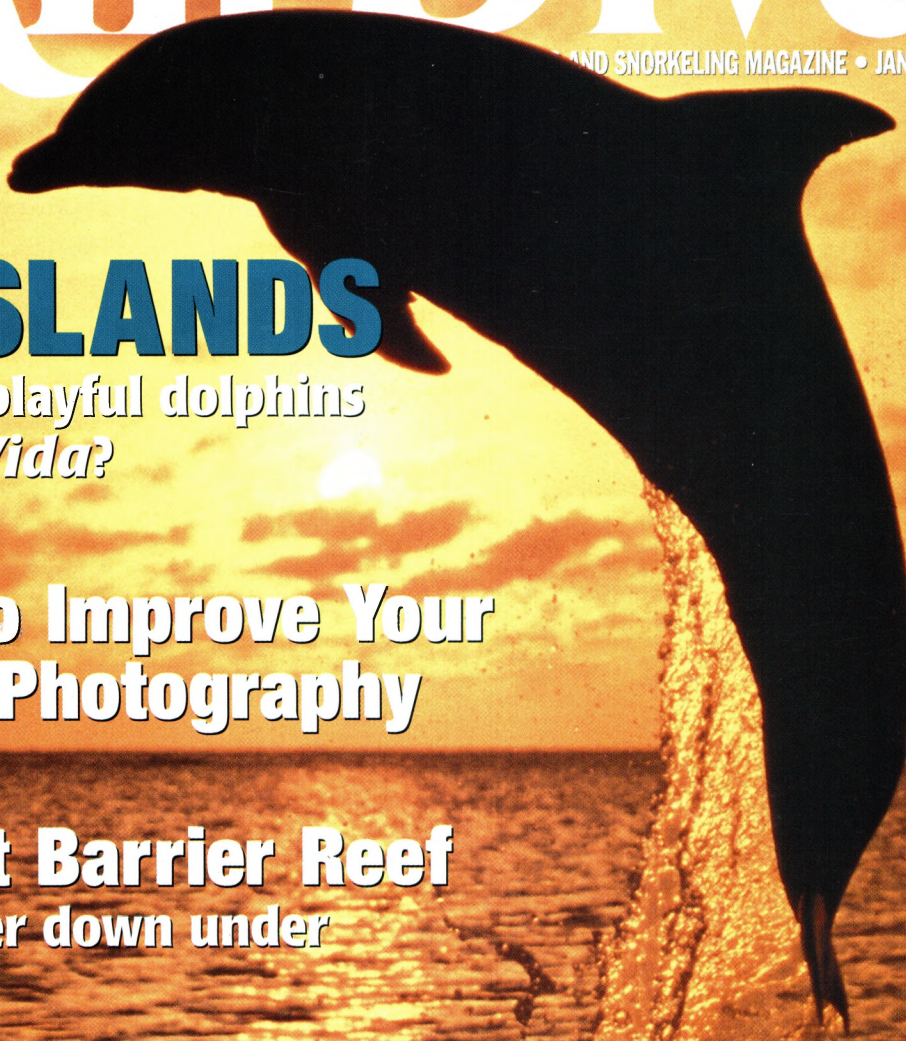
INSIDE The Best Dang Buoyancy Around—A GUIDE TO BCs

Skin Diver

AND SNORKELING MAGAZINE • JANUARY 2002



The BAY ISLANDS
Sheer walls, playful dolphins and...*Salva Vida*?

5 Tips to Improve Your Night Photography

The Great Barrier Reef
A true wonder down under

To Live and Dive in Kwajalein

Key Largo
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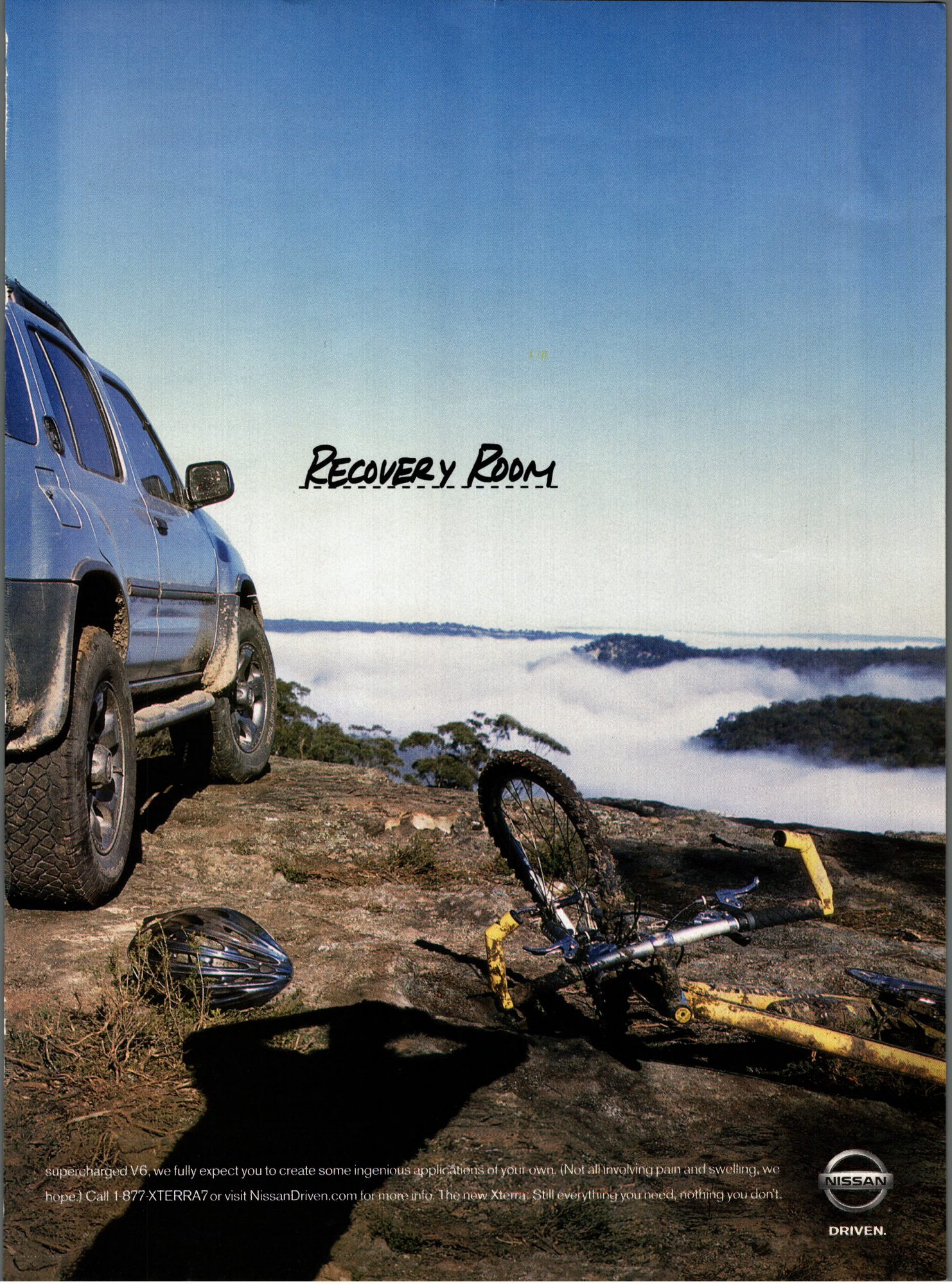


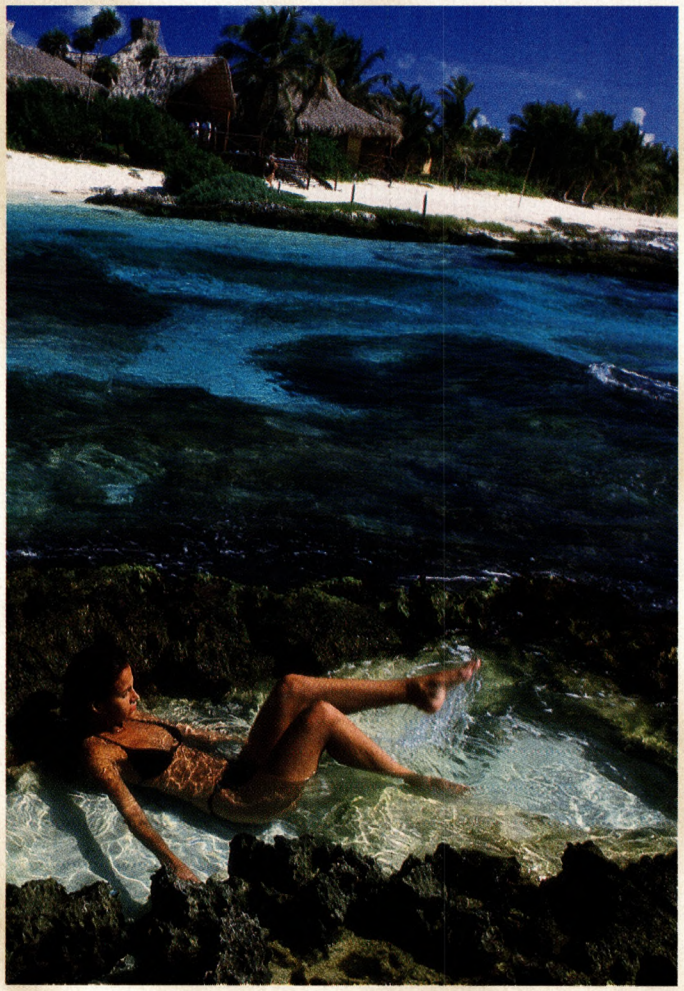
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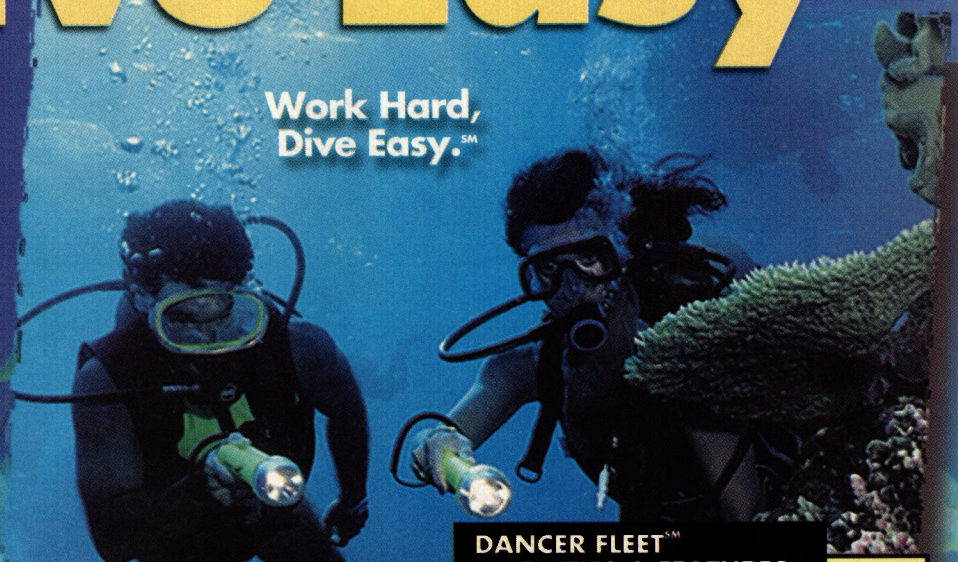
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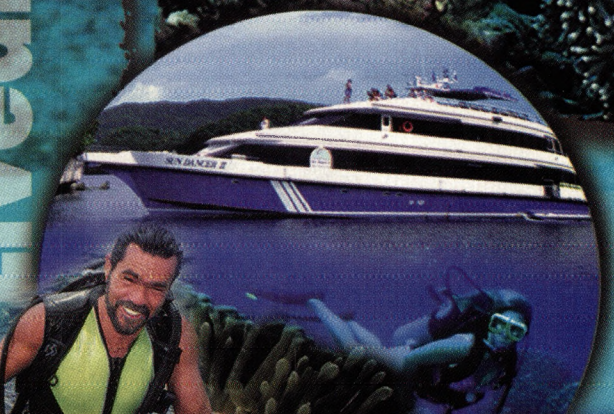
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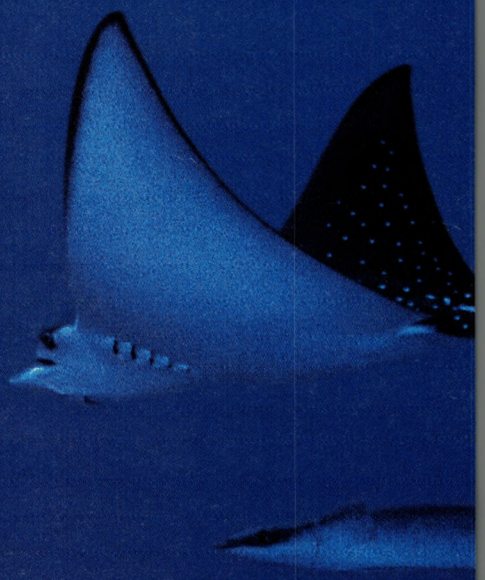
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Volume Fifty-one • Number One

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ABOUT THE COVER:
A Bottlenose Dolphin's salute to a radiant sunset near Anthony's Key Resort, off Roatan, Honduras.
Photo: Brandon D. Cole

Background photo:
An Eagle Ray shadowed by a Remora in the Seychelles.
Photo: Ethan Gordon

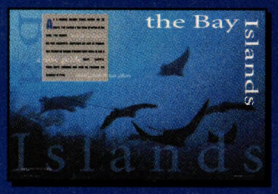






ONLOCATION

BAY ISLANDS Having been pretty much everywhere there is to go, Fred Garth has reasons to keep returning to the Bay Islands: West End, Mary's Place, Whale Sharks, dolphin encounters, red rope sponges that "turn him on" and ice-cold Salva Vida (translation: Life Saver) beer to wash it all down with. Take a sip…(page 62).



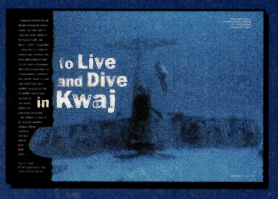
KEY LARGO Some of the best diving is in our own backyard and we can prove it. Accompanied by a Discovery Channel film crew, Marty Snyderman became close friends with the barracuda that slip and streak through the Atlantic off Key Largo. They led him on explorations of the *City of Washington*, *Duane* and *Bibb*, and introduced him to the jacks, spadefish and Jewfish that reside there. Can you come out and play? (page 58)



GREAT BARRIER REEF Imagine visiting the GBR in search of the perfect…*sarong?* Editor Ty Sawyer's jaw dropped to his fins when a few of his group decided that's just what they came for. Taking hold of other dumfounded divers, our trusty leader giant-strided into a sea of rays, wrasse and *Tridacna*, and visions of sarongs quickly disappeared from their furrowed brows (page 44).



KWAJALEIN To get beyond the velvet rope of Kwajalein, travel writer Jonathan Bird got the nod to film just what it is about Kwaj that has everyone learning the secret handshake: shipwrecks and downed planes galore. And don't forget Elvis…he lives there. Sites like these beg to be dived but are protected by the U.S. Army, a daunting doorman that would make any bar hopping groupie quiver in her go-go boots (page 38).



SEYCHELLES Ethan Gordon is like Indiana Jones, born for adventure. Trudging through uninhabited jungles, encountering 200-pound land tortoises and fruit bats the size of alley cats are the "stuff" of life for Ethan. It's even better when the "stuff" is wet. During the day, Black-tipped Reef Sharks, wild dolphins and Manta Rays soaked his brain, while Atlantic waters sang him to sleep in the evening. Grab your hat, Indie (page 48).

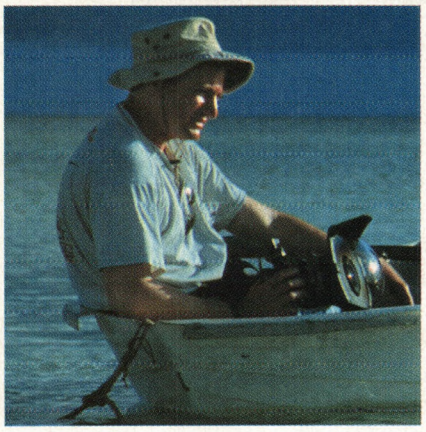




CONTRIBUTORS



JONATHAN BIRD's recent work on the Kwajalein Atoll represents the first time he has ever worked on a film exclusively about wrecks rather than marine life. "I've never been much of a wreck diver," Jonathan said. "But I got addicted to squeezing through narrow doorways and getting my wetsuit covered in rust on this project. Dirty elbows became a badge of honor among the film crew!" The addiction stuck—on the way back from Kwajalein, Jonathan and his wife Christine took a side trip to Truk to unwind with another week of wreck diving.



ETHAN GORDON anchored his dingy in only a foot of water to photograph the ever present Blacktip Shark population at Aldabra. "Once the sharks saw the bait, they bit at anything," he said. "Including my camera housing, which now bears the scars of several attempts." Ethan reported that by the end of the photo shoot, there were "hundreds" of sharks around. "But we were patient," he said. "Wisely, we waited a little while before getting out of the dingy."

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EDITORIAL

The Secret History of Water

I ONCE READ THAT THE WATER THAT CURRENTLY EXISTS ON THIS PLANET IS THE SAME amount, and even the very same water, that existed hundreds of millions of years ago. The water that makes us up, that quenches the thirst of someone on the other side of the world, that lies frozen at the two poles or accumulates in clouds, has been recycled around the globe, in various forms, for eons.

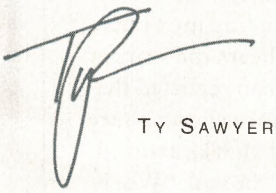
From a philosophical point of view this means we are all connected to almost everything that exists—heck, even rocks have some moisture. From a diver's point of view, this means that the waters that flow though the Gulf Stream and brush against Key Largo may be the very same waters that once filtered over Australia's Great Barrier Reef. The Seychelles and the Bay Islands of Honduras are secret brethren in the waters just off the beach. And the ghostly blue that surrounds the numerous WW II plane wrecks off Kwajalein may at one time have been droplets on leaves in the amazon rain forest.



Does this mean all diving is the same? Of course not. The corals, sponges, marine life and submerged structures define the essence and experience of a place. On the other hand, whatever it is that drives each of us to giant stride off the side of a boat, descend over a reef and, for a too short a period of time, try to connect to the liquid realm is probably universally coded in our genes.

Which is why our contributors this month have ventured near and far to sample the waters of the world. To connect and experience. It's why writer Fred Garth's latest jaunt through the Bay Islands elicits a similar feeling of euphoria to photographer Ethan Gordon's visit to Aldabra in the Seychelles, even though the two destinations are more than a few time zones apart. And, why a grizzled old been-everywhere diver like our Field Editor Marty Snyderman can go to Key Largo and come home as surprised and dazzled as Jonathan Bird did from Kwajalein's forbidden, military protected waters.

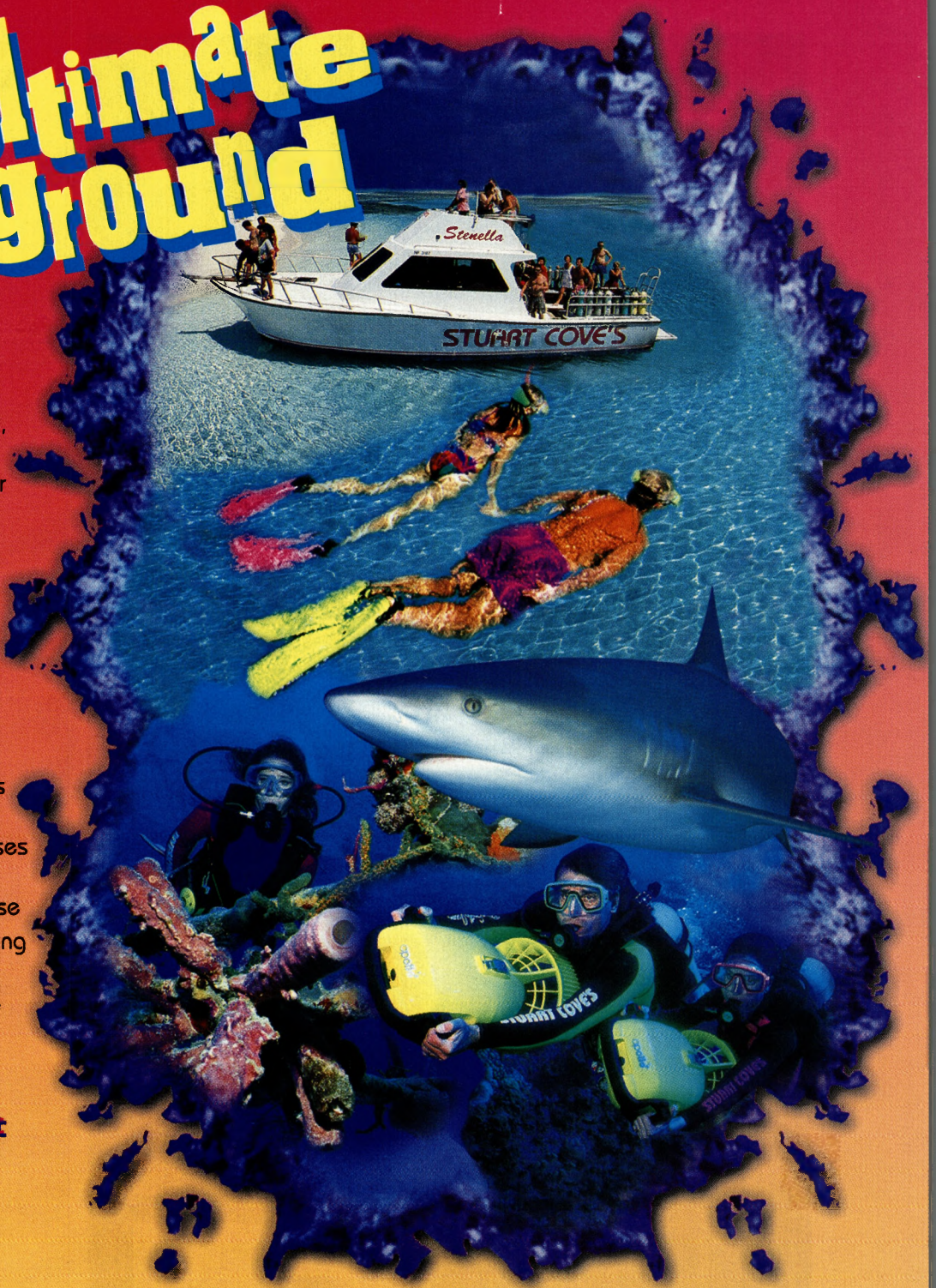
On my recent trip to Queensland, Australia, I heard the Tjapukai creations myths. The aboriginals believe their Story Waters link the past with the present. For them, water is central to their creation. And, if all the water that has ever existed is indeed present today, it probably has much to do with our creation, too. Which, at least for divers, explains a lot.



TY SAWYER, EDITOR

PHOTO: AMOS NACHOUM

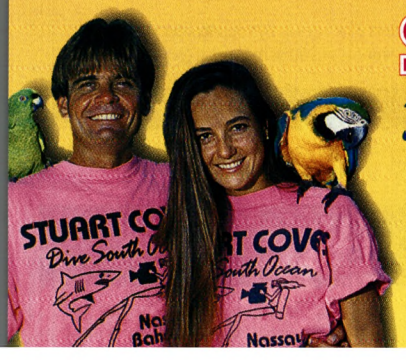
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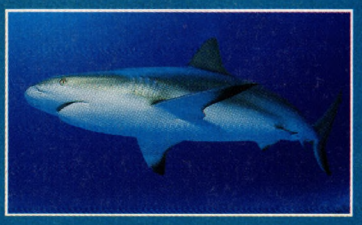


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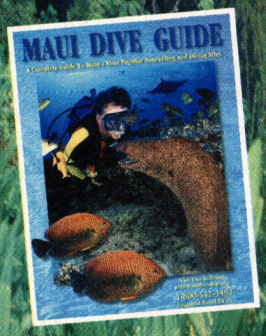
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PHOTOS: (SEA CAMP) COURTESY BOB SOTO'S DIVING. OPPOSITE: (WRECKS) BILL HARRIGAN; (TIMELINE) SD COVER: GERI MURPHY; NG COVER: DAVID DOUBILET; ALL OTHERS BRADLEY IRELAND PRODUCTIONS

CURAÇAO'S KIDS SEA CAMP & FAMILY FUN WEEK 2002

IF YOU MISSED THE FIRST ONE, here's your chance to catch up. The second annual Kids Sea Camp and Family Fun Weeks are scheduled for June 29 to July 6 and July 6 to July 13, 2002. Brought to divers by the Curaçao Tourist Board, Ocean Encounters & Peter Hughes Diving, the Curaçao Sea Aquarium, Lions Dive Hotel, Marine Awareness Center and Caribbean Adventures, the 2002 event is likely to match last year's excitement and then some.

Kids will enjoy a fun-filled week of Sea Camp at the Curaçao Sea Aquarium. The aquarium holds 54 touch tanks and two pools, containing over 400 species collected from Curaçao's rich underwater habitat. Here, kids learn all about the inhabitants of the island's reef system and see them up close. They learn to snorkel and SASY in the Sea Aquarium Animal Encounter tank.

While the kids are becoming marine gurus, adults can check out the Caribbean's top dive destinations. With two boat dives daily, divers can explore walls, wrecks, reefs and dive sites such as the Car Pile, Mushroom Forest, Alice in Wonderland—as well as some of the best shore diving in the region. A night dive is also sure to keep mom and dad busy, while kids enjoy an evening pizza and movie party.

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For more information, call the (800) 3CURAÇAO or visit www.curacaotourism.com.

STINGRAY CITY



? until Present— Cayman fishermen clean their daily catch and routinely discard the waste in the shallow waters off Grand Cayman.

1930— *Popular Mechanics Magazine* publishes article labeling stingrays as the "vermin of the deep," stating that they were "vicious and valueless marauders" that should be exterminated.



1986— Jay Ireland starts feeding and photographing local stingrays.

1986— Pat Kenny names the site and writes first article about "Valley of the Rays" in local Cayman publication.



September 1987— Geri Murphy and Paul Tzimolous visit the site with Ron Kipp. Geri renames the area Stingray City and writes the *Skin Diver* cover story, "Stingrays, Friend or Foe?"

Ft. Lauderdale's Wreck Wonderland


Mercedes.


Jim Atria.

Divers from around the world have discovered that Greater Fort Lauderdale is host to some of the country's best natural and man-made wrecks. Along with its 23 miles of sugar sand beaches, Greater Fort Lauderdale is a crown jewel of southern wreck diving. A three-tiered reef system starts in just 20 feet of water and, in some places, is just 100 yards from the shore. It's a fantastic environment to place an incredible variety of wrecks.

More than 80 artificial reefs have been created through a carefully developed program designed to enhance the growth of marine animal and plant life in the region. In recent years, artificial reefs have been set in place by sinking everything from a 435-foot freighter to a 94-foot DC-4 airplane, to create a diver's wonderland of exploration, as well as attract an abundance of fish for anglers. Hundreds of species of marine life call these wrecks their homes.

Some of Greater Fort Lauderdale's top wrecks include *Sea Empress/Aqua Zoo*, Tenneco Towers' Submerged Oil Rigs, *Captain Dan*, *Jay Scutti*, *Hog Heaven*, *Guy Harvey*, *Jim Atria*, *Mercedes*, *Union Express*, Qualmann Tugboats and *Rodeo 25*.

A great resource to the area is a new 20-minute scuba diving video,"The Wrecks and Reefs of Greater Fort Lauderdale," produced by George Monteiro of Sea-Cam, dedicated to the diving in Greater Fort Lauderdale, and available (free of charge) by calling the Greater Fort Lauderdale Convention and Visitors Bureau. Divers will be amazed at the footage of Greater Fort Lauderdale's underwater treasures. A free, interactive companion CD-Rom is also available.

For more information, contact the Greater Fort Lauderdale Convention & Visitors Bureau at (800) 22-SUNNY, or visit the website at www.sunny.org.

Castaway to Fiji

The Travel Advisory for Fiji has officially been removed from the State Department website. Travel to Fiji is once again safe in the eyes of the government.

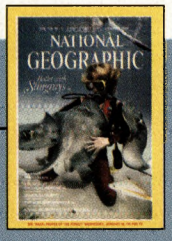
With the recent elections and a newly formed government, this change in status should, once and for all, dispel any hesitation American travelers might have had regarding the safety of visiting the friendly nation of Fiji.

For more information on Fiji, visit www.castawayfiji.com.

TIMELINE



1989 — Tourists start visiting the area and the once maligned rays' popularity soars.



1989 — *National Geographic* magazine sends David Doubilet to cover the site and publishes cover story "Ballet of the Rays."

March 1, 1993 — Front page of the *Wall Street Journal* calls Stingray City "most successful underwater attraction worldwide."



Today — Google finds 94,127 entries when searching for the word stingray.



Today, 15 years after the first photograph was taken at Stingray City, hundreds of scuba divers and snorkelers visit the site every week.

—Jay Ireland and Georgienne Bradley

LETTERS

Readers Speak Out

To Spear or Not to Spear

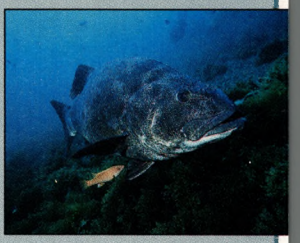
I enjoy receiving *Skin Diver* magazine with my DAN coverage. However, I am occasionally disturbed by articles that appear to encourage or condone spearfishing.

The sport of scuba has enjoyed incredible growth and development, not just in terms of numbers of divers, but also in the growth of divers' awareness of the environment. It cannot be disputed that protecting the underwater environment is absolutely crucial for the continued well-being of the sport.

As a frequent diver, I have been able to compare firsthand the damage and destruction to aquatic and reef environments due to overfishing. The fish populations in poorer countries are severely depressed due to spearfishing or fishing with poisons or explosives. As a result, the poorest nations, which would benefit the most from dive tourism, have trouble attracting divers to their overfished reefs. The "untouched" reefs of Grenada in the West Indies feature beautiful corals and wrecks, but a complete lack of the large, colorful parrotfish common to other reefs in the area. The spearfisherman does not contribute to the economy as much as a diver on vacation.



I am disturbed that Marty Snyderman, on page 21 of the November [2001] issue, pleas with California divers not to spear Giant Sea Bass, while at the same time, saying that "Spearfishing is a respectable sport...." I would argue that spearfishing is not respectable, but despicable.



I thoroughly enjoyed your 50th Anniversary Issue. I would love to ask the "old timers" in their rubber masks and homemade spear guns, holding up a huge grouper, "Do you see 'em that big any more?"

—Drew Thompson, Washington, DC

In Response

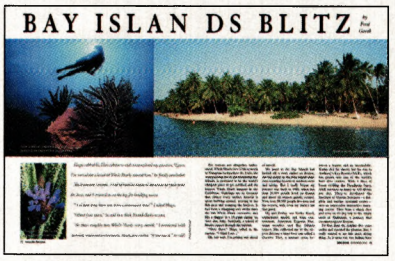
I believe that responsible spearfishing is an honorable activity. I believe that irresponsible spearfishing is despicable and immoral. Skilled, respectful spearfishermen do not shoot at "anything with gills." They target specific species and animals in specific size ranges so that they can be sure they can kill, not injure, their quarry. If they don't get onto the right fish or have a great shot, they pass. I think we should protect species that need protection, and I think those who want to continue to use Earth's resources in a responsible manner should do so.

—Field Editor Marty Snyderman

Sweatshops of the Sea

I would like to comment on the recent article, "Bay Islands Blitz" in the September 2001 issue of *Skin Diver.*

In a small sidebar to the article, the author mentions how there are three chambers within the Bay Islands, and that this is great for sport divers. He also mentions, that it is the by-product of lobster divers "regularly violating every diving table ever written in pursuit of the spiny bugs." What the author fails to mention is that these men are forced to dive deep since the shallows have been harvested of lobsters, and that in protected areas (where sport divers dive) no lobsters can be taken. They also don't know what dive tables are. These divers are trying to feed their families in a poor country, and are being taken advantage of by business owners concerned with making a profit.



What is the difference between this practice and that of clothing sweatshops?

The sidebar pointed out that Red Lobster restaurants have a direct "link" to these lobsters, the awareness of which will cause me (and hopefully others that feel as I do) to boycott these restaurants until they find other sources.

Keep up the good work, and hopefully it will reach the Bay Islands' lobster divers, too.

—Richard J. Sarli, via e-mail

No Welcoming Committee in West Caicos

I just received my October 2001 issue of *Skin Diver,* and was reading the Dive Atlas of the World. On page 69, in the Tropical Atlantic section, there is a mistake about the Turks and Caicos Islands.

It says that there are shore-based operations on West Caicos Island. I have spent two weeks in Providenciales for two years in a row, and I can tell you that as of May this year [2001] there were no dive operations on West Caicos. There are dive operations from Providenciales that go there, but the island of West Caicos is uninhabited. There is some very beautiful diving there, perhaps some of the best.

—Robert Hunter, via e-mail

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Resting the Sea

BY JEAN-MICHEL COUSTEAU

TALK TO ANY LONG-TIME DIVER ABOUT HIS OR HER favorite site, and you will hear the same refrain: "It's good today, but you should have seen it 20 years ago!"

Then the veteran will launch into a description of the many and varied fish species that have grown scarce in the last couple of decades. With a shake of the head and a resigned sigh, he or she will conclude that it's a shame, and that something should be done about it.

We often talk of doing something about the decline of fish. That "something" must obviously involve reducing what is called "fishing effort," a shorthand calculation for the number of vessels, hours at sea and size of catch.

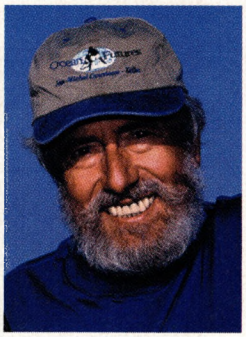
Until now, most fisheries management efforts have concentrated on setting quotas on individual species, restricting the season and experimenting with new gear types that will hopefully minimize the catch of non-targeted species or bycatch.

These measures work, more or less, here and there. But global fishing effort remains high, and spectacular crashes of fish stocks around the world demonstrate that our approach is not working. Clearly, the "something" needs to be "something else."

Marine Protected Areas (MPA) appear to be the next logical step. And California seems poised to become the first state to implement them on a large-scale basis.

The reasons are clear. According to an article in *The Christian Science Monitor*, the take of finfish has increased 60 times over in just the past seven years. Stocks of perch, bocaccio and other rockfish are dwindling fast. Sheepshead, which feed on kelp-destroying sea urchins, are depleted, and the state's famed abalone fishery has crashed.

All of these losses have accrued in spite of some of the nation's, and the world's, toughest marine conservation guidelines, and a system that already includes 103 protected areas. So, it was with a sense of desperation that conservation organizations, scientists, divers and educators urged the state to do more.



The result was the Marine Life Protection Act of 1999.



Reserves can help conserve our economic future, as well as biodiversity. Opposite page: A hapless victim to a fisherman's net.



This act stressed the necessity of "no-take zones" to provide some real protection for sea life. In order to protect areas representative of all the state's major undersea ecosystems, the Department envisions a coordinated network of parks that could amount to as much as 15 to 20 percent of state waters. Currently, only 0.2 percent are protected.

At last, something is being done.

But not all are pleased. The breadth of the plan has caught the fishing industry off-guard. To them, it is too much, too fast. And while the industry supports the goal of conservation, many fishermen are concerned about the short-term ramifications, the months and years necessary to rebuild stocks. Time they may be idled. Some say that the MPA approach has not been proved, and that more science is needed.

> ...how are we to distinguish between natural fluctuations and human influence?

In fact, wherever they have been tried, MPAs do help rebuild fish stocks. In one study that compared no-take reserves in California with fished habitats, the reserves were found to contain 16 times more harvestable fish than areas outside the boundaries. In the Georges Bank, off the U.S. Atlantic coast, fishing was prohibited for five years, beginning in 1994. As a result, scallops and groundfish are slowly rebuilding. Together with gear limitations, quotas and other tools, closures of large areas are becoming an essential aid in efforts to regenerate depleted stocks.

But the beneficial functions of reserves reach beyond their commercial value. They also lessen bycatch and habitat damage by fishing gear. By permitting full-scale communities to exist, they preserve a healthy ratio of age and gender within the species, preventing populations from crashing. And they assist the movement of larvae across large expanses, which replenishes gene pools of distinct populations.

As for the science, this is indeed an interesting point. Some of the science on MPAs is inconclusive. Why? Because scientists are having a hard time finding undisturbed areas to use as a baseline for how the ocean should look. In the words of one paper on marine reserves published in the *Bulletin of Marine Science*, "There are virtually no areas north of the Antarctic... that have exploitable resources where scientists can study natural marine systems."

I believe this is a crucial point. How can we develop coherent and responsible management plans for the future if we have no healthy ecosystems to measure our progress by?

And more significantly, what is "natural"? Current historical ecology reveals that the ecosystems we presume to be pristine have actually been overexploited for hundreds of years. Given this long-term legacy of depletion, how are we to distinguish between natural fluctuations and human influence? This is important, because this alone can teach us how much fishing effort is too much.

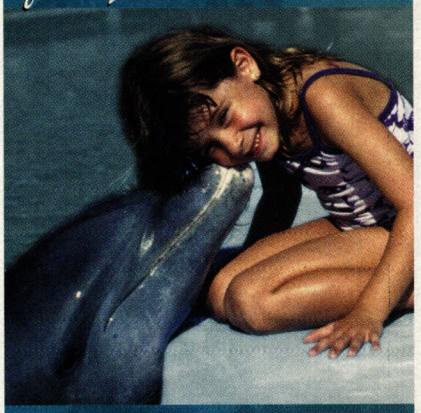
Allowing the sea to rest and recover works on many levels. But to make it a success on the social level, policymakers will have to find a way to assist those whose lives depend on the sea, so that they also have reason to support what everyone agrees must be the next step in ocean conservation.

OPPOSITE PHOTOS: TOM ORDWAY; (JMC PHOTO) LIONEL POZZOLI. THIS PAGE: DAVID FLEETHAM

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Going Vertical

BY MARTY SNYDERMAN

I am taking and enjoying your online course. In the course, you suggest that photographers try to shoot vertically oriented frames when a vertical orientation best compliments the subject, but when I try to turn my camera system vertical underwater, life gets complicated. Any suggestions? —Gino M., Plano, TX



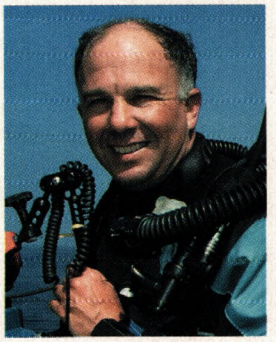
This Sanguine Frogfish has a large head. Capturing it vertically helps give the image more impact.

A 35 MM FRAME IS A RECTANGLE, NOT A SQUARE. THIS means that images are either wider than they are tall (thus horizontally oriented), or they are taller than they are wide (thus vertically oriented). I don't have concrete data, but I feel confident in saying that most underwater photographers shoot far more horizontal frames than vertical frames. I also feel confident in saying that the reason for the discrepancy has more to do with the construction of cameras and the ease of holding camera systems horizontally during a dive than it does with the most aesthetically pleasing way to frame a subject. But you want the vertical vs. horizontal decision to be based on aesthetics, not the construction of your gear.

By design, it is more natural to pick up and hold cameras when they are oriented to create horizontal frames. It is also easier with most underwater camera trays to mount a camera horizontally.

When you try to take a traditional camera system on a dive and change from shooting a horizontal to creating a vertical image, some problems can arise. For example, if you are using strobes that are mounted to arms, which in turn are connected to your camera or camera tray, when you rotate the camera from horizontal to vertical the strobes tend to get repositioned into less than ideal locations. To correct and reposition again you have to manipulate long, articulated arms or you have to move at least one strobe arm from one mounting position to another somewhere in the camera system. All of this repositioning costs you time, requires some dexterity and buoyancy control, and can generally be a pain in the posterior, but it is necessary in order to create the most desirable strobe positioning for vertical images.

The bottom line here is no matter how you cut it, slice it or dice it, when you raise the camera to your eye it is probably horizontally oriented and most photographers rarely change that factor.



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ASK THE PRO

turer of accessory camera trays, arms and other parts, makes a "Pivot-Tray" that allows you to quickly rotate your camera 90 degrees from horizontal to vertical, or vice versa, while underwater. All you need to do is push a "lock/unlock" button on the back of the tray and rotate the camera into the desired position. You never have to touch a strobe or strobe arm. With a Pivot-Tray, you can easily move back



UltraLight Control Systems, a manufacturer of accessory camera trays, arms and other parts, makes a "Pivot-Tray" that allows you to quickly rotate your camera 90 degrees from horizontal to vertical...

and forth between horizontals and verticals in a matter of a few seconds, while avoiding all of the awkwardness that accompanies some antiquated camera systems.

I have used the Pivot-Tray and a similar product called a "Flip-Tray," made by Technical Lighting Control, with both a Nikonos and a couple of housed single lens reflex systems, and I find the products to be wonderful innovations. A Pivot-Tray or Flip-Tray won't guarantee that Gino or any other underwater photographer will compose a great shot, but it sure makes it a lot easier to quickly frame subjects in the most complimentary manner.

Getting Started: Your First Night Moves

NIGHT DIVES PROVIDE WONDERFUL photographic opportunities for those who are prepared to take advantage of them. A list of favorite subjects includes "sleeping" fish, feeding corals, scallops, basket stars, a variety of crabs, shrimp and lobster, free swimming eels, nudibranchs, snails, squid, octopods and more. In many instances, dive sites that seemed somewhat drab and colorless during the day, appear to be an explosion of life and color at night. In most cases, the reason for the difference is that too often we don't see the colors during daytime dives because we fail to use a dive light. Of course, on night dives we do use lights, and light adds splashes of color almost everywhere we look.

Clearly, a lack of great subject matter is not a problem you are likely to face as a beginning night photographer. This is not, however, to suggest that night time photography does not come without a special set of challenges. For starters, it is usually more difficult to see and set the controls on your camera, lens and strobe. The area in front of your camera is usually well-lit, but not the camera system itself.

Another major consideration that becomes obvious as you gain more and more experience as a shooter is that many of the subjects that are out and about at night are not out in the open during the day because they don't like to be in bright light. Shine a dive light on many nocturnal creatures and they vanish as if it just turned high noon.

Here are five tips to help make your night shooting easier, and help you create better images.

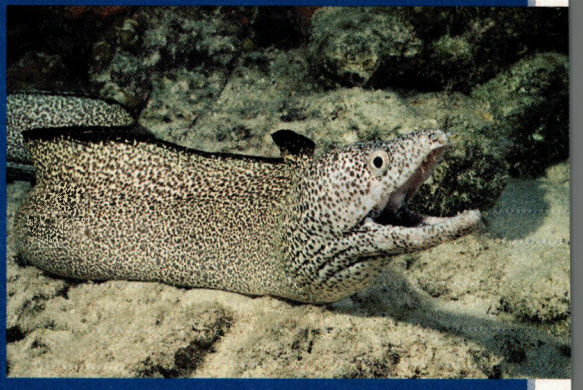
1.) Start your night photography with a macro system such as a close-up kit, Macro Lens or extension tube so you can do all of your photographic "set-up" before you get into the water. All you will need to do underwater is find good subjects, frame and shoot.

2.) If you opt to try your hand with larger, wide-angle subjects, look for a lot of color contrast between your subject and its background. Framing a lightly hued subject such as a feeding basket star against a black-water background can work well, but framing a black subject against a black background (the color of water at night) is the path to disappointment.

3.) If you use a bright dive light to enable you to see, try to avoid pointing the light directly at your subject. Instead, try to use the dimmer edge of the beam to illuminate your subject so that you don't cause your photographic quarry to flee for cover. Once you get comfortable with night diving, try using a light with a dimmer, narrower beam.

4.) Even if you were very careful to pre-set all of the controls before your dive, be sure to check your camera, lens and strobe settings after you get into the water and get yourself squared away. It is too easy to accidentally bump and, therefore, change a control without realizing it until you see your results.

5.) Listen to divemasters during pre-dive briefings to gain a better understanding of potential subjects and where and how to find them. Then, go slow, look for colorful subjects, and have fun!



Tucked into crevices in reefs and walls during the day, eels venture out and move freely at night.

WANT TO LEARN MORE ABOUT UNDERWATER PHOTOGRAPHY?

Take an online course at Marty Snyderman's School of Underwater Photography at www.skin-diver.com. This comprehensive course consists of nine interactive classes taken at your convenience.

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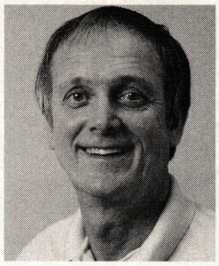
www.diveaeris.com

WRECKFACTS

BY ELLSWORTH BOYD

GARY ALLEN OF FT. LAUDERDALE, FL, IS PLANNING a trip to the Dominican Republic and asks where a large ship was sunk in 1999. The freighter *St. George*, used to transport corn and wheat from Norway to the United States, was sunk in 100 feet of water as an artificial reef off Club Viva Dominicus, La Romana, Dominican Republic. Representatives of Viva Resorts, in cooperation with the Dominican navy, sank the ship only a five-minute boat ride from shore, where it is used strictly as a recreational dive site. The *St. George*, abandoned in an owner's dispute over repairs and dockage fees, had been confiscated by the local authorities and sat at the dock gathering rust before it became a reef. Viva Resort details are available by calling (800) 898-9968, or call Elena Franzetti, who is in charge of the dive center at (809) 686-8053.

MARY CAMPBELL OF CHARLESTON, SC, VACATIONS IN Daytona Beach, FL, and asks about shipwrecks offshore. Jim Elbers, a retired general contractor who lives at Ponce Inlet, has found 14 wrecks within a 50-mile radius of the Ponce Inlet Lighthouse. His list of more than 100 other wrecks, in a wider radius, continues to grow. Two of his favorites are the *Wicker Wreck*, full of wicker furniture, and the *Packard Wreck*, which was transporting two 1928 Packard automobiles in its hold. Elbers' list includes wrecks from the 1500s through present-day disasters. He says the *Maracaibo*, *Veracruz* and *Commodore* (featured in Stephen Crane's book, *The Red Badge of Courage*) are just a few of many local wrecks with fascinating histories. Elbers is writing a book that will be published by the Ponce Inlet Lighthouse Association.



The *St. George*

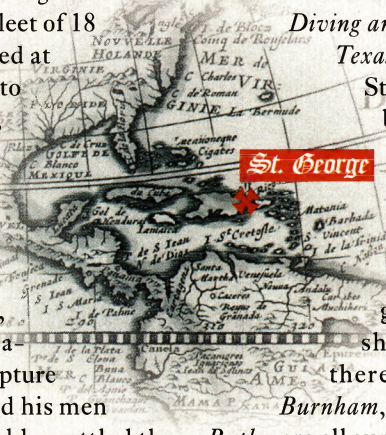
PAUL WHITE, VIA THE INTERNET, STARTED DIVING A year ago and is interested in shipwrecks off the coast of Maine. To start with, back issues of *Skin Diver* are helpful. The November 1985 issue contains information on the *Empire Knight*, *The Francis*, *Bay State* and *Governor Dingy*. A good book is *Shipwrecks Unforgotten: From Maine to the Hudson River* by Norbert Freitag, who writes about the *Royal Tar*, *Cambridge* and *Washington B. Thomas*. Other books include: *Shipwrecks Around Maine* by William P. Quinn, and *Shipwrecks and*



Once a rust-ridden vessel, the *St. George* is currently one of many beautiful Dominican Republic wrecks used for recreational diving.

Marine Disasters of the Maine Coast by Peter Dow Bachelder.

STEVE ANTHONY, A MEMBER OF THE Maryland Maritime Archaeological and Historical Society, is seeking historical shipwreck sites in the Chesapeake Bay for his group to do field study on. Commodore Josh Barney's fleet, scuttled in the Patuxent River in 1814, would be an interesting study. During the War of 1812, Barney and his fleet of 18 gunboats were stationed at the mouth of the river to protect Washington, D.C. from advances by British General Robert Ross. Barney withdrew upstream when Ross, accompanied by 4,000 soldiers, sailed into the Chesapeake. Forseeing the capture of his fleet, Barney and his men blew up what they could, scuttled the rest, then marched to Washington to defend the capital. Divers have discovered some of the wrecks near Mt. Pleasant, not far from Upper Marlboro, MD, the highest point on the Patuxent River. Other vestige, buried beneath mud and sand in shallow water with low visibility, remains undiscovered.



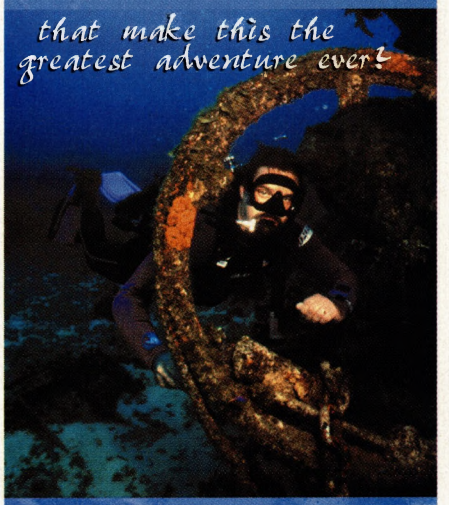
MARK PHILLIPS OF AUGUSTA, MN, AND Dick Leroux OF Massena, NY, ask where they might find information on shipwrecks in the St. Lawrence River. Ray Tucker of the New York State Divers Association says his club has two dive guides available for $12 each. One has 92 sites, including the St. Lawrence and Niagara Rivers, the Finger Lakes, and Lakes George, Champlain, Erie and Ontario. The other guide lists 24 sites between the upper St. Lawrence at Lake Ontario to Massena, NY. Order them from NYSDA, 9226 Sly Hill Rd., Ava, NY 13303.

THANKS TO PHIL CHURCH OF NYSDA, I located Mike Williams of Ary, Ontario, who, along with Skip Couch and Don Martin, compiled *Divers Guide to the Upper St. Lawrence River*, a list of 71 sites starting from the Iroquois Locks to Wolfe Island. To order, send $12 to Williams at 26 Cooper St., Ayr, Ontario NOB 1EO, Canada.

JERRY QUEBEDEAUX, VIA THE INTER-net, says he can't find much information on shipwrecks off the Texas coast. Twenty-five Texas coast wrecks, including their latitudes and longitudes, are listed in *A Guide to Sunken Ships in American Waters* by Adrian Lonsdale and H.R. Kaplan. Tom Townsend's *Texas Treasure Coast* also features many wrecks off the shores of the Lone Star State. Inland, coastal and offshore sites are covered in *Diving and Snorkeling Guide to Texas* by Barbara Dunn and Stephan Myers. The area between Freeport and Galveston is a hot spot. San Luis Pass, a hazardous inlet west of Galveston is purported to have sunken galleons, barges and shrimp trawlers sunk there. The colliers *Laura Burnham*, *John Ames* and *Jennie Butler* are all sunk there as well, along with the *Margate*, an oceangoing barge. In 1972, the *Virginia Fogg*, a 572-foot-long tanker, exploded and sank in 100 feet of water, 33 miles southeast of Freeport. After unloading a flammable cargo of benzene at Freeport, the vessel left port with volatile hydrocarbon in its hold. The ensuing explosion killed 39 crew and sank the 12,500-ton ship.

DAVE ROE OF COLUMBIA, MD, ASKS about the *Titanic* exhibit at the Maryland Science Center in Baltimore's Harbor Place. There's good news for those who thought they missed it. The exhibit, "*Titanic* Science—The Real Artifacts, The True Stories," has been held over an additional three months, until January 1, 2002. Produced by the Science Center in conjunction with New York's SFX Corporation, it's the first educational exhibit to combine scientific findings with actual artifacts, such as a perfectly preserved men's wool suit, a half-drunk bottle of champagne, eyeglasses and calling cards.

Send your wreck questions to Ellsworth Boyd, 1120 Bernoudy Rd., White Hall, MD 21161. Be sure to include a stamped, self-addressed envelope for a personal reply. Ellsworth may also be e-mailed at ellsboyd@aol.com.

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GEAR AND GADGETS

BY RYAN ALLEN AND DARYL CARSON

TechnoMarine TechnoDiamond Sport Collection

TechnoMarine's TechnoDiamond Sport Collection is perfect for those who enjoy the finer things in life, or who don't have anything better to do with two and a half G's. This collection consists of 12 watches with interchangeable wristbands—a color for each mood, perhaps. The watches are water-resistant up to 330 feet, with mother of pearl faces and stainless steel, unidirectional rotating bezels, which are (brace yourself) lavishly adorned with 120 full cut diamonds. Features also include a chronograph 0.10 second and date indicator. Divers just have to hope that these glimmering beauties won't blind the fish. Suggested price: $2,500.

TechnoMarine (305) 438-0880, www.technomarine.com





Pelican Micro Case

"Way better than Tupperware" is the motto Pelican should be using to hock their new Micro Cases. Leave the burping to your egg salad bowl and move your tool kit, cell phone, Palm Pilot, Gameboy or other essential gadgets into a proper home. These new cases have an automatic pressure purge valve, exclusive speed locks and are built to be water-tight, airtight and crush proof. They also come with an unconditional lifetime guarantee. Available in six sizes and colors: metallic silver, metallic gold and black, or clear with red, yellow and blue inserts. Suggested price (model pictured): $17.95.

Pelican Products (310) 326-4700, www.pelican.com

Quick Draw Bracket

When you decide to saddle a pony bottle along for the ride, consider using the Quick Draw Bracket. The aluminum and stainless steel system incorporates no hose clamps, so changes can be made with the pull of just one pin. The bracket slips under the diving BC tank belt or any 2-inch web belt. No tools are needed, so the tanks are easy to change, and bottles can be swapped out in seconds. Suggested price: $109.95.

Ultimate Products Corp. (425) 788-7500, www.quickdrawbracket.com



The Sammy

The little towel that could, that's The Sammy. This sport towel has been used by swimmers and divers for more than 20 years, including Olympic champ Greg Louganis. The highly absorbent poly-vinyl material is ideal for drying off after dives or laps. Its compact size replaces bulky wet towels, making it handy for traveling and camping. After use, it can be easily wrung out, and ready to absorb more, or be put away in the accompanying storage tube. The towel is machine washable, and if taken care of properly, can last up to four years. Available in seven colors and two different sizes—the traditional size of 17" by 13" and the new size of 27" by 17" (Olympic Blue only). Suggested prices: $13.50 and $17.

Shima American Corp. (888) 843-7269, www.thesammy.com







Diving Unlimited International Drysuits

TLS350 (blue): DUI has incorporated technology used by U.S. Coast Guard Rescue Swimmers in the sleek design of the TLS350. The lightweight, quick-drying fabric (a tri-laminate material made mostly of nylon and butyl rubber) combined with high performance features (see below), make it a favorite among traveling divers. Suggested price: $1,698.

CLX450 (black): With the CLX450, DUI has taken the durability of Cordura and blended it with the suppleness of polyester. The result is a tough, lightweight, fast-drying suit. Suggested price: $1,998.

Features for both suits include diagonal front entry zipper, telescoping torso that allows for a closer fit and freedom of movement, suspenders and crotch strap to hold the suit in place, double layer material over knee area for extra durability, internal waist adjustment cord, swivel inlet and low profile exhaust valves, latex neck and wrist seals. Both suits are available in men's and women's stock sizes, Special Production and Signature Series.

Diving Unlimited International (800) 325-8439, www.dui-online.com

Underwater Kinetics Ready-to-Go Dive Case

One of the great dive travel dilemmas is what to pack your stuff in: Hard cases are great for protection, but a pain on small boats; while soft bags don't take the kind of abuse airports like to dish out. Underwater Kinetics offers a sweet solution in their 3-in-1 combo, which includes the UK 1127 Transit Case, the UK 309 Dry Box and STAHLSAC's Deluxe Mesh Backpack. The large hard case is built for air and road travel, is watertight and designed to protect valuable gear from mishandling and theft. The case features a telescoping handle and wheels for easy rolling. The watertight 309 drybox is ideal for keeping documents, smaller valuables or personal electronics safe and dry. And, for carrying gear from the hotel to the dive site is the STAHLSAC nylon mesh backpack. It has a breathable mesh main compartment, nylon secondary zipper compartment and padded adjustable shoulder straps. Suggested price: $299.95.

Underwater Kinetics (858) 513-9100, www.uwkinetics.com



DEFYING GRAVITY

14 BCs to help you on your quest for zero-G. by Ryan Allen & Ty Sawyer

Gravity sucks. It holds us to the face of the earth, takes our youth and deposits it under our chin and waistline, and drags us to the bottom of the ocean. To escape it, one has to: a) spend $20 million to ride into space with a bunch of strangers, drinking dehydrated vodka with a side of borsch; b) after getting a referral from Michael Jackson, pay a visit to Beverly Hills; or c) spend $3 on a tank fill and slightly less than the cost of a ticket to the moon for a buoyancy compensator, then slip into the water that covers 75 percent of this planet. You decide.

If either "a" or "b" is your preference, *Congratulations!* But if "c" is your choice, read on.

Neutral buoyancy is the one skill that can add to your diving enjoyment more than anything else you could master. Why fight it? Though experience is essential for buoyancy skills, the right equipment ain't gonna hurt. BCs should fit well, be comfortable and easy to adjust, perform under a variety of conditions, and most importantly, look cool.

And with all the choices on the market and the customization allowed, there's no need to compromise.



Aqualung Malibu RDS

This BC comes with a built-in body butler. Using some technology that was probably developed in the military's super secret skunk works, the Malibu RDS comes with a Swivel Access System (which is concealed in the harness), that self-adjusts to the contours of a divers torso for a conforming, almost custom fit. Its back-mounted air cell allows great freedom of movement, and the two dumpable weight-integrated pockets hold up to 20 pounds (two fixed weight pockets, on the back, add another 10 pounds). A twin tank mount is optional, giving this low profile BC versatility for a variety of dive styles and conditions.

Aqualung (760) 597-5000, www.aqualung.com







Riptide Trek

I can say with certainty that no other BC in this review also doubles as a backpack. The Trek back mount air bladder (50 pounds of lift) can be unzipped and replaced with a dive bag for toting your gear. A handy design, yes, but its buoyancy trim and fit adjustability characteristics are the real reason to pay attention to this BC. Its four-point weight-integrated pocket system (two mounted shoulder level on the tank band; two dumpable pockets on the waist) provides an even dispersion of weight. The fully adjustable chest and waist straps are complemented by a crotch strap that keeps the BC from riding up. Its shoulder straps have two reflective epaulets that keep your gauges off the reef and help your buddy see you in low-light or low-viz conditions. Photographers will appreciate the stainless steel blue D-rings for clipping off cameras and slates. And, with a nicely padded lumbar support, soft pack and low-profile design, the Trek is an ideal travel BC. It even comes equipped to take doubles.

Riptide (303) 635-8181, www.diveriptide.com

International Divers Nekton 2000:

The Nekton 2000 is cross-bred for maximum buoyancy control. It's designed to fit the needs of both the recreational and tek diver. The positioning of the weight-integrated pockets (high on the tank harness and around the waist) provides a nice center of gravity for buoyancy by distributing support to the shoulders and hips. The waist weight pockets are easily loaded and dumped, and tidily tucked beneath an ample zippered pocket. Its combination back-mount and semi-wraparound air bladder (with 30 to 50 pounds of lift, depending upon size) is designed to inflate away from the body, for less squeeze. Since the road to perfect buoyancy begins with fit, the Nekton 2000 engineers have developed the new Sea-Era harness that includes two straps with quick-release buckles, an adjustable cummerbund and padded lumbar support. The shoulder straps allow freedom of movement, and the soft-pack tank mount keeps the BC's weight down, giving the Nekton 2000 the added bonus of being good for travelers.

International Divers, Inc. (800) 257-2822, www.seaira.com













Cressi Safety 109

Cressi's C-Trim design of the S109 incorporates front weight pockets with Velcroed quick-release handles and snaps, as well as two back weight pockets. The BC has a lateral stretch gusset for improved expansion and hydrodynamic movement. A cushioned collar prevents agitation to a bare neck, a padded backpack adds comfort for the lumbar, and the adjustable cummerbund comes with zippered compartment. This model features seven plastic D-rings, a whistle and clips on either front side for the regulator and octopus. Dump valves can be found on either shoulder and on lower right, for heads-down air venting.

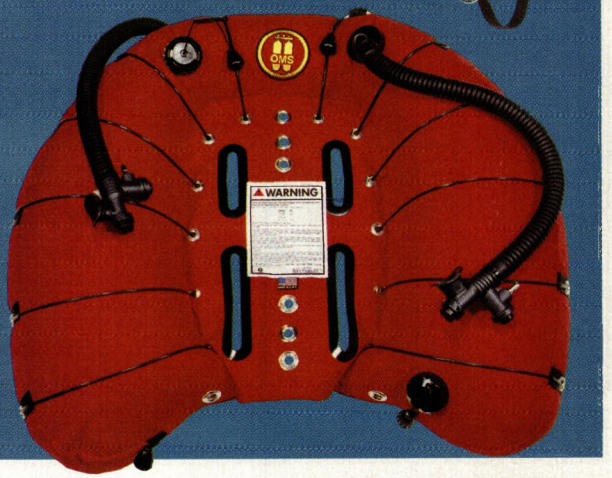
Cressi-sub USA Inc. (800) 338-9143, www.cressi-sub.com

Ocean Management Systems IQ Harness & BC

Tekkies and cave divers tend to gravitate towards OMS's modular-styled BCs. The new IQ harness system has been re-engineered to provide a more streamlined appearance and fit, with added options such as a single cylinder cam band system integrated into the back of the harness, enabling you to lighten your travel weight, and an increased number of D-rings. The single bladder BC (pictured, dual bladder also available) has two dump valves, and inflator hoses and dump valves are interchangeable for a variety of configurations. The shell material has been upgraded to 1000-denier cordura, with a 5-ounce urethane backing (compared to the traditional 3 to 4 ounces). The elastomeric bands (optional) assist in deflation, and typically retract the BC to a width less than the diver's shoulders. By adding or eliminating bands in different parts of the BC, it is possible to adjust lateral trim (to compensate for stage bottles, cameras, etc.) and horizontal trim (head up, down or level). An adjustable waist belt fits the BC to the torso and can be used to connect the add-on No Sag Pocket system, for carrying weights and accessories. Lift capacities range from 35 to 100 pounds.

Ocean Management Systems, Inc. (845) 457-1617, www.omsdive.com





PHOTOS: TY SAWYER/DARYL CARSON







Beuchat Master Lift Elite

The expansive single air cell of the Elite offers maximum surface floatation, while allowing freedom of movement underwater. Comfort and ease are two major aims of this BC, which comes with an adjustable cushioned backpack with handle, a padded harness with quick-release adjustable straps, a cummerbund with storage pocket, reflective piping, and large drop-shaped expandable pockets (with nylon zippers and self-draining panels). Two quick-release, weight-integrated pockets with large handles enable fast removal, along with two rear trim pockets for permanent weight storage (5.5 pounds each). There is a weight capacity of 10 pounds for each weight module. For D-ring afficionados, the Master Lift Elite has eight stainless steel D-rings and four smaller, plastic D-rings, which should handle just about any accessory. A compact power inflator with a soft touch mechanism, two over-pressure valves at the shoulders with rapid exhaust features, and one lower right manual dump valve allow easy venting.

Beuchat North America, Inc. (305) 548-3483, www.beuchatdiving.com

IST Proline Saturn

If you want to get close to zero-gravity and dive neutrally buoyant, a BC with the name of a heavenly body, the rugged construction of a spacesuit (1000-denier cordura and 800 PU coated nylon) and a long list of tricked-out features couldn't hurt your quest. Everything on the Saturn is large enough to adjust while wearing the thickest of gloves—the big, quick-release buckles on the adjustable shoulder straps, chest strap and waist strap; the nob to pull on the right shoulder dump valve; the heavy-duty zippers on the large pockets; and the thoughtfully placed monster-truck, stainless steel D-rings on either shoulder strap and below each pocket. The integrated, releasable weight pockets (they hold 10 pounds each) are hidden under the pockets for streamlining, and two trim pockets, on the back, behind the shoulders, hold up to 5 pounds each (resulting in a nice placement of weight over the shoulder and hips). The cushiony lumbar support gives the Saturn added comfort.

IST Proline (909) 622-9600, www.istsports.com











Dacor's Rig Pro

The Rig Pro was designed for the demanding tasks of working on oil rigs, salvage, military operations, search and recovery teams and sea harvesting, as well as recreational specialties like cave and wreck diving. The goal was to deliver a rugged, professional product with all the tek features built into a compact and comfortable BC. A stainless steel backpack with a single tank adapter can easily be converted to accommodate twin tanks. And realizing that not all tek tasks are the same, this BC offers an optional redundant bladder that increases the lift from its normal 75 to 135 pounds; the second bladder is a completely separate system with its own inflator. The Rig Pro's 1000-denier cordura nylon easily supports its 32 pound maximum, weight-integrated system. Two low and one high manual dump valves, with another dump at the inflator hose, offer numerous options for buoyancy control. The Rig Pro's sternum strap is strategically placed for easy access to drysuit inflator hoses. The top shoulder straps sport a quick-release buckle, and a circular stainless steel ring to facilitate self-adjusting movements around different suits; and the lower cummerbund adjusts to compensate for a wide range of sizes and uses, and comes with an accessory pocket. Six stainless steel D-rings line the shoulder straps, with two additional D-rings at the end of the lower straps. A crotch strap runs from the lower front of the BC jacket to the bottom of the stainless steel backpack, preventing ride up.

Dacor (800) 323-0463, www.divedacor.com



Aeris ATMOS XT BC

The ATMOS XT is a rear-inflation BC with wrap-around air lobes to provide more lift and an upright position on the surface. Three over-pressure relief valves (two on the shoulders and one on lower right) optimize buoyancy control. This BC is weight-integrated with dual function pockets—two dumpable with quick-release (up to 20 pounds) and two non-dumpable (up to 10 pounds)—and an integrated weight capacity of 30 pounds. Lift capacities vary from 32 to 48 pounds, depending on the size (Sm, Med, Lg). This three-piece system has multiple attachment points (four stainless steel D-rings and two plastic D-rings). Additional features include moveable utility pocket, Scotchlite reflectors, adjustable cummerbund with zippered pocket, a padded backpack with handle, optional crotch strap, and a tank height and adjustment strap that also adapts to twin tanks. (Pictured with accessory kit: knife, light, extension cord.)

Aeris (800) 647-0605, www.diveaeris.com



Tusa's Platina Evolution

The Platina places its emphasis on tank stability in order to maintain optimal balance underwater. Using dual rails, the "Ultimate Stabilizing Harness" prevents the tank from moving around, while the patented "Independent Harness System" separates the main bladder unit and the harness system. Since the shoulder strap attaches directly to the harness, tank movement is further eliminated. The harness' soft padded cover does not effect buoyancy control, as it is made from non-float and non-water absorbent material. The bottom of the shoulder straps can be attached in either of two positions, which depend on the conditions of use and the body type of the diver. The "Tanks Suspension System" has been improved to allow the diver to adjust the tank after putting it on—not possible with most BCs. In addition to TUSA's own O.P.E.V. system, two dump valves have been added to allow rapid pressure exhaust in any position. Weights can be inserted into the weight cartridges, as well as the spacious pockets on the front of the jacket and two weight pockets on the back. In emergency situations, weight cartridges can be released with the pull of a knob. Additional features include six D-rings, reflective tabs and a whistle.

Tusa (562) 498-3708, www.tusa.com

Scubapro Glide Plus

Packed with slick features to help you achieve astronaut status on earth and do it comfort, the Glide Plus is also the only BC in this group with wrap-around air cell construction. Divers have been hovering midwater with this technology for years, and now the classic design comes with an impressively designed, patented one-step, quick-release weight system (balanced with two back-mounted trim pockets), a plush-padded harness and a soft neoprene neck roll for cozy comfort. Six stainless steel, bent D-rings—one on each shoulder strap, above the zippered pockets and below each weight module—should be more than ample to handle your clip-on accessories. And the wide cummerbund fits snugly around the waist and includes a third zippered pocket.

Scubapro (619) 402-1023, www.scubapro.com













SeaQuest Raider

Raider couldn't be a more apt name for this mega-BC. With a 50-pound lift capacity, double bag back-mounted air module that, when inflated, looks like 1050-denier nylon butterfly wings, four air dumps, six stainless steel, heavy-duty D-rings and enough padding and patented adjustments to snuggle up with at night, the Raider is built for maximum use and function. SeaQuest's patented Weight Holster release system holds up to 32 pounds of lead, and the Raider has two tank strap-mounted pockets for fine tuning trim. The swivel buckles on the adjustable shoulder straps and multi-set cummerbund allow each user to customize fit. When combined with the patented Self-adjusting Lumbar Support system and new torso adjusting system, you'll be hard-pressed to find a BC that can be molded or adjusted more to your exact specifications and needs. In the end, you'll be ready to go anywhere there is water.

SeaQuest (760) 597-5000, www.sea-quest.com







Zeagle Escape

Subscribing to the less-is-more concept of diving, the Zeagle Escape is functional simplicity at its best. The Escape offers a tremendous combination of lightweight, low-profile design and full features. With its ergonomically designed, adjustable shoulder straps, 35-pound lift, back-mounted air cell (with bottom and shoulder air vents) and both tank and dumpable weight module integration (total 50-pound capacity!), the Escape pretty much has everything a beefier BC has except the size. Add an adjustable cummerbund, two hide-away pockets and even an emergency whistle, and the package is complete and ready to go.

Zeagle (813) 782-5568, www.zeagle.com





Dive Rite Transpac II

Keeping in line with Dive Rite's modular BC system, the versatile Transpac II is geared to fit a wide range of divers, with the ability to accommodate everything from lightweight single cylinders to heavyweight back-mounted doubles with stage and deco bottles. And, if you side-mount, this guy can take care of that as well. Four D-rings on the harness provide attachment points for lights, pony bottles and other equipment. Padded shoulder straps (available in five different lengths) provide comfortable fit, and it's possible to add or remove D-rings. In regards to tank adjustment, a strap helps you mount the harness on single cylinders at the same height each time, and grommetted mounting holes for doubles enable positioning of cylinders at any of three different heights. Also included with the harness are mounting slots for two-inch/50 mm cam straps to use with single cylinders. A heavily padded backpack provides lumbar support and helps transfer weight to the hips. Pockets and accessories can easily be mounted on the waist strap, which has two D-rings and a stainless-steel quick-release buckle. Dump valves can be found on the left shoulder and bottom right. The compact, light, fitted nature of the Transpac II gets you one step closer to zero-G and is very conducive to traveling.

Dive Rite (386) 752-1087, www.dive-rite.com

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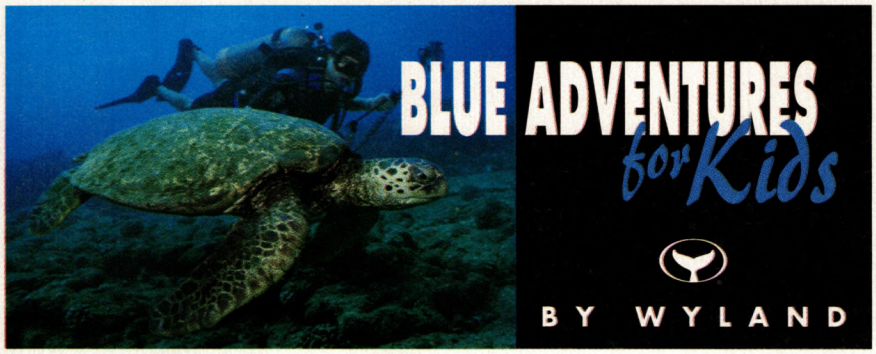
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TAKING THE FAMILY FOR A DIVE

EVERY PARENT WHO SCUBA DIVES HAS probably toyed with the idea of getting their children involved in the sport. Most people would agree the image of diving side-by-side with their kid is appealing, but is it realistic? The debate over the right age to start scuba diving has been waged for years. Even though your child might look ready physically, there are dozens of factors to consider before pushing them in a direction they might not yet be ready to go.

As most of you already know, scuba diving can be incredibly demanding, both physically and mentally. The rigors of the sport can be a challenge for many adults, much less kids. The equipment is heavy, requires continual monitoring, and a constant assessment of your surroundings is essential. These are very real considerations and generally require skill sets that most children, especially those under 14 years of age, lack. Compounding this is the fact that the jury is still out on the effects of compression on young people. Does it affect plate growth? Will it affect their hearing in the future? Assuming these present no dangers to children, there remains the mental side of the sport. Can the child assimilate all the knowledge required for safe diving? Are they responsible enough to be a dive buddy?



According to the National Association of Underwater Instructors (NAUI), children as young as 12 years old may be allowed to dive, but before diving, a certified NAUI instructor must interview the child and the parents to determine if that child is ready. The instructor evaluates if the child is strong enough to handle the equipment and fully comprehends all the rules.

Those are critical questions, says Gordon Boivin, a NAUI workshop director. "Is that child strong enough to assist if you have a cramp?" Boivin asks. He believes the best young candidates for scuba diving are first and foremost strong ocean swimmers. They're already acquainted with swimming in strong surf and low visibility water, and have spent considerable time snorkeling. In other words, they've developed a comfort level in the ocean, which is a key prerequisite for scuba diving.

The Supplied Air Snorkeling for Youth (SASY) system is a good middle ground for the child who has progressed past snorkeling, but isn't quite ready for scuba diving. This ingenious system—manufacturers include ScubaPro and Aqualung—involves a regulator and a small secure scuba cylinder on the child's back. A full flotation life jacket prevents the child from going underwater, but the apparatus gives the child the advantage of a self-clearing regulator,

PHOTO: STUART AND MICHELE WESTMORLAND

which allows the child to participate to a larger degree in the scuba world. He doesn't have to worry about a snorkel full of water. He's got a tank, can breathe underwater like his parents, but doesn't require the constant checking that a dive buddy does. The SASY system is used during spring and summer for these purposes at Shark Reef at Disney's Typhoon Lagoon in Orlando, FL. It frees up the family to swim throughout the lagoon and saves the children from any possible affects of compression.

Another alternative to scuba is freediving. By efficient freediving, you gain entrance into the marine world with a minimum of intrusion. You're quieter and, in some cases, such as in shallow reef areas, you see more. This type of diving has been instrumental in much of my underwater photography. With mask, snorkel and fins, I can immerse myself in the amazing world beneath the surface and photograph almost as many creatures as I can with full scuba gear. The only difference is my nonthreatening appearance has allowed me to get closer to many creatures that would otherwise shy away.

I can see why parents who have enjoyed this fascinating world would want to share it with their children. Fortunately, many options exist to experience the beauty of the marine world in a manner best suited to your child's age, maturity and physical ability. All you and your child have to do is figure out what those levels are. After that, the sea's the limit!

An internationally renowned marine life artist, Wyland has been diving for the last 25 years. To see his work and learn about his nonprofit organization, visit www.wyland.com.

Got questions?

Even if your child has been thoroughly trained by a certified scuba instructor, it never hurts to supplement your knowledge of the effects of diving. Here are a couple resources:

- *The Encyclopedia of Recreational Diving*, published by PADI: Uses simple language to explain chemistry, physics, physiology, equipment and the aquatic environment.
- *Diving Physiology in Plain English* by Jolie Bookspan. Covers effects of immersion, decompression tables, exercise and nutrition.

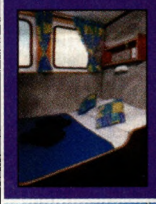
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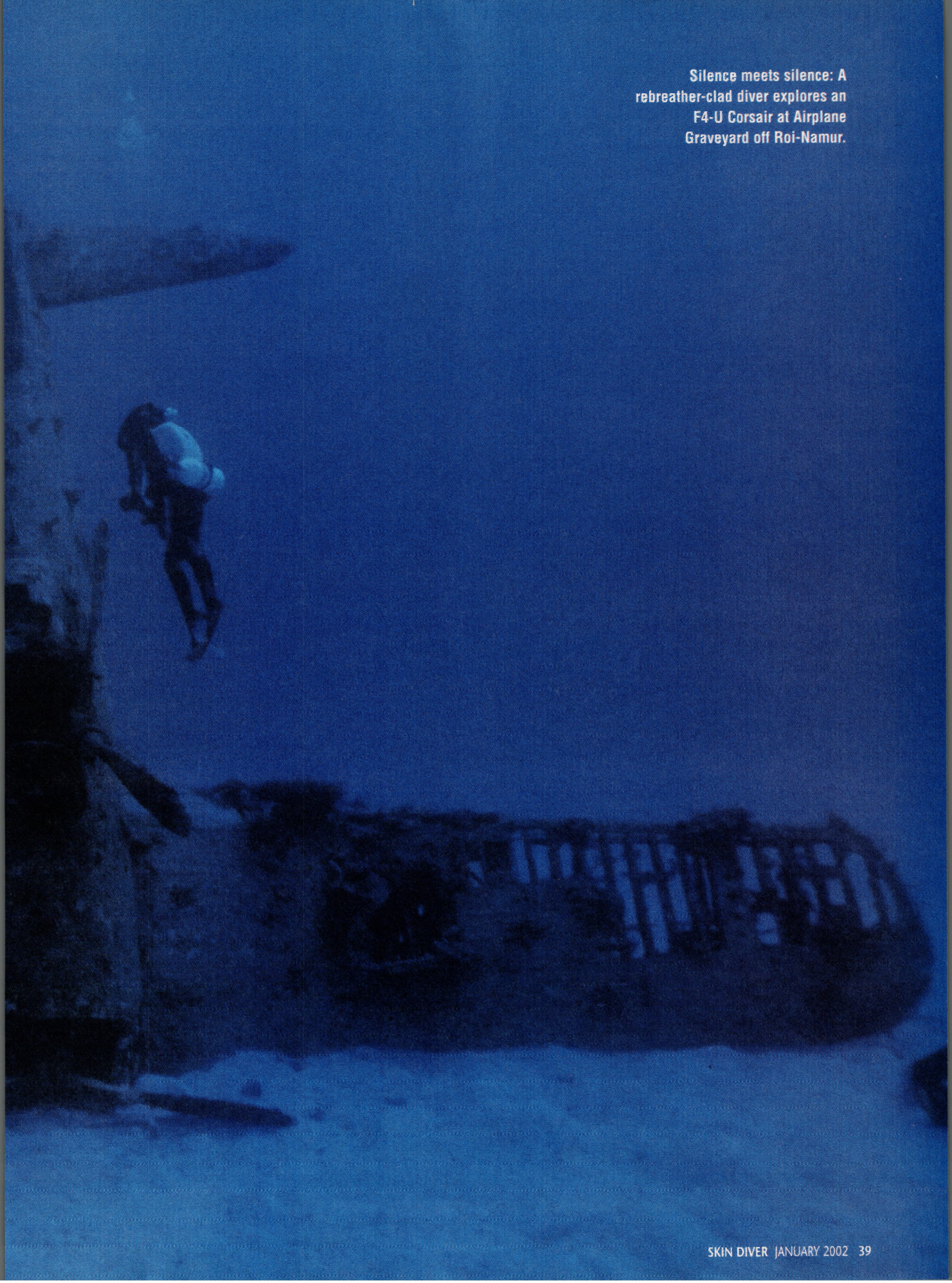
to Live and Dive in Kwaj

Kwajalein Atoll has the distinction of being the world's largest coral atoll, and it's smack dab in the middle of the tropical Pacific. But there's a catch to diving there.

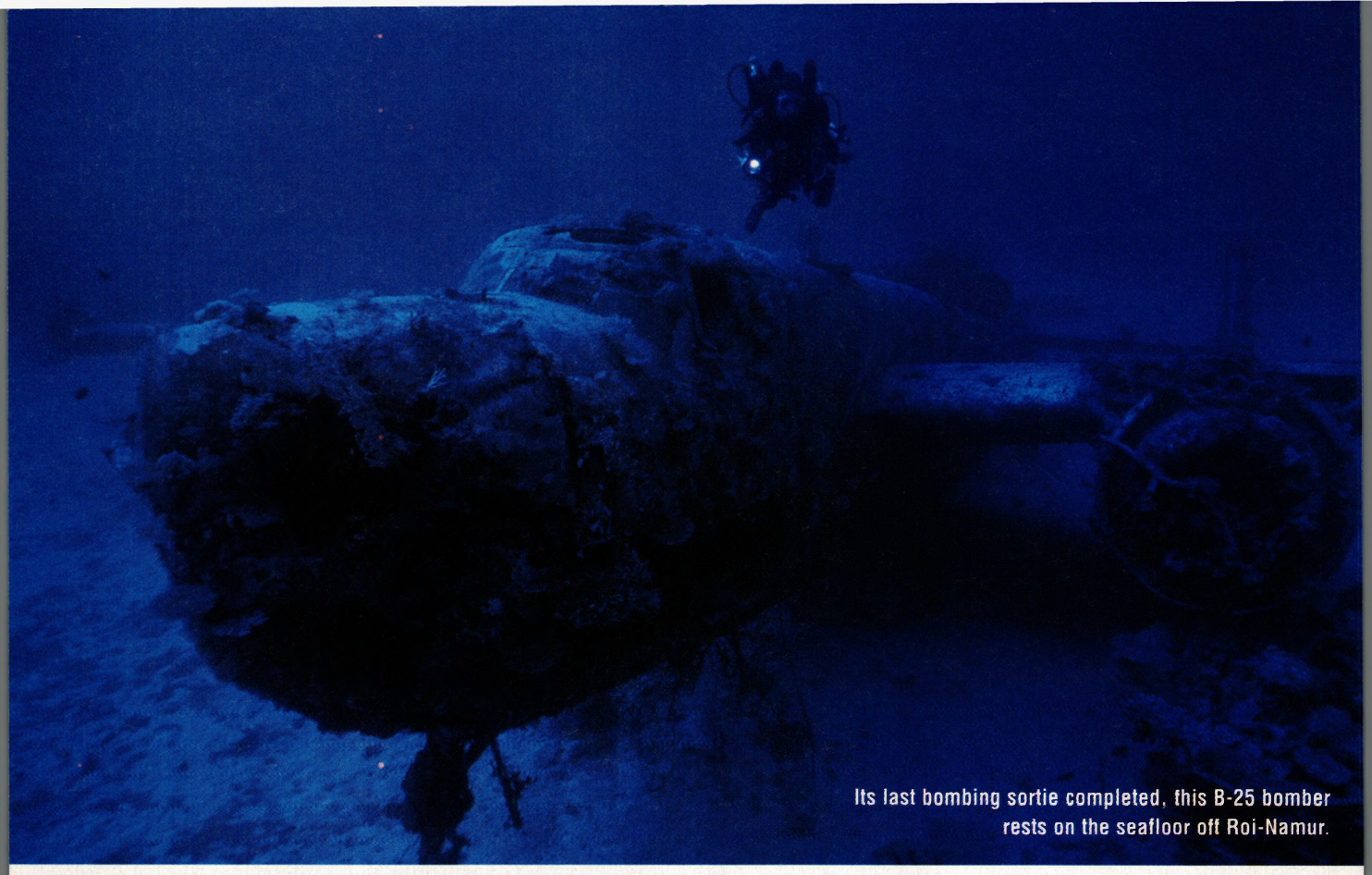
Kwajalein is a restricted military base. However, few active-duty military troops live and work on Kwajalein. Most of the people there are civilian military contractors who run the dozens of radar sites, which track space satellites, keep an eye out for ballistic missiles and run tests on new missile defense systems being developed.

Just offshore, is some of the most lip-smacking, untapped diving anywhere. And they keep it all to themselves...

Text and Photography by Jonathan Bird



Silence meets silence: A rebreather-clad diver explores an F4-U Corsair at Airplane Graveyard off Roi-Namur.



Its last bombing sortie completed, this B-25 bomber rests on the seafloor off Roi-Namur.

Like any military base, entire families live on Kwajalein. They have an elementary school, a middle school and a high school. They have a grocery store, a movie theater, a U.S. Post Office and a hardware store. If it weren't for the hot tropical climate, cobalt blue water, palm trees and amazing diving, you would think you were right in some American suburb—without the cars. Everyone rides bicycles.

Before World War I, the Germans claimed Kwajalein, taking it from the Marshallese people. After WW I, Japan got it from Germany.

Following Pearl Harbor, the U.S. launched Operation Flintlock to destroy the Japanese hold on the Marshalls. The Japanese expected the U.S. to hit their easternmost bases first, so they heavily fortified them. But the U.S. surprised the enemy, and hopped around those smaller atolls to hit the main base at Kwajalein in February of 1944. The battle, which lasted only four days, was an overwhelming victory for the U.S. and a tragic loss for Japan. Fewer than 300 American lives were lost, but nearly 6,000 Japanese perished. It is still remembered in Japan as one of the worst losses of the war.

After the battle, the U.S. placed its own base on Kwajalein and used it as a stepping stone in the Pacific theater. After the war, Kwajalein Atoll remained a U.S. possession and active military base until 1994, when it was ceremoniously given back to its original owners, the Republic of the Marshall Islands. Yet the main island of Kwajalein and a few smaller islands in the atoll (such as Roi-Namur and Meck Island) are still leased by the U.S. and operated as a military base.

There isn't a whole lot for people to do in their spare time on Kwajalein, so scuba diving, sailing and golf are popular. The Kwajalein Scuba Club boasts that it is the second largest diving club in the world, with nearly 500 active members. But to dive Kwajalein, you either have to work there or know someone who does; you need permission from the military to get on the island and a resident to "sponsor" your visit.

Sounds like a hassle, why would anyone want to go? How about *Tridacna* the size of suitcases, shipwrecks in reasonable depths everywhere, the greatest collection of WW II airplane wrecks anywhere and some of the prettiest reefs imaginable—all exclusively dived by the locals. Oh yeah, and did I mention sharks? Lots of sharks.

Last year, with the help of my good friend, Tom Krasuski, who lives on Kwaj, as it's called, I visited the atoll with four other people. My company, Oceanic Research Group, got permis-



Off Sand Island, a tiny sand spit in the lagoon near Roi, one can find some of the most perfect Pacific reefs in the world, complete with *Tridacna* 3 feet across, healthy coral and all kinds of amazing macro life.

sion from the Army to do a documentary on the battle for Kwajalein. It was the first time a non-military film production had been cleared to work on Kwaj, and in August of 2000, we spent five weeks there.

One of the guys on my film crew was Mark Miller, a former resident of Kwaj who is regarded as one of the world experts on Kwajalein shipwrecks and author of some of the few books on the subject. He took me into the recesses of the Japanese ships to find artifacts that we filmed for the documentary. In the holds of the ships were *sake* and beer bottles, clothing, ammo, bombs, china and even human remains.

Back in the early '90s, Mark discovered the wreck of the *Daisan Maru*, a former Japanese whaler that was converted to military service. He kept telling me about the beautiful black coral on it and the hordes of lionfish swimming about the deck. I was suspicious. After all, he hadn't seen the wreck in nearly 10 years. How could he be sure they would still be there?

The dive club on Kwaj keeps mooring buoys on the most popular wrecks, but the rest of them require a bit of skill to find. The *Daisan Maru* can only be found by GPS or experience. We had the numbers, so we punched them into Tom's handheld GPS and followed the arrow. When we arrived, we watched the depth sounder for a big bump on the bottom. After a few passes back and forth, we found it. We threw our anchors and hooked the wreck.

Getting into the water with all our gear—rebreathers, etc.—was never a simple task. But once there, the *Daisan* turned out to be everything Mark promised and more. I will never forget seeing the wreck as it came into view in the deep blue. As I swam up the starboard side at a depth of about 130 feet, I saw a big black coral bush with five lionfish hanging in it as if they were birds perched on a branch.

We went to a lot of trouble to take rebreathers to Kwaj. Rebreathers require soda lime to scrub the carbon dioxide out of the breathing mix, pony bottles as bailouts, and, of course, nitrox. None of these things are easy to get in out-of-the-way places. This is where diving guru Cliff Simoneau came in.

Cliff, Vice President of Technical Diving International, served as the project resident tek diver. He lugged a portable nitrox blending station out to the island and taught us how to mix gas. He trained us on the rebreathers, then dived with us for the duration of the project and helped out when necessary. We were able to dive longer with the nitrox than we could with air; the rebreathers gave us incredible gas economy. Rather than mixing a dozen tanks of nitrox for open-circuit, we could dive all day on a 50-cubic-feet bottle. We did safety stops on open circuit 50/50 nitrox, which gave us a high level of safety. They have a chamber on Kwaj, but if anyone got bent, the Army would have thrown us off the island.

The rebreathers proved most useful working within the wrecks. When bubbles hit the ceiling of a wreck, they knock rust loose, which rains down into the shots. The rebreathers make very few bubbles, which greatly reduces fallout. Furthermore, the minimal amount of noise they make is great for approaching marine life, like the lionfish on the *Daisan Maru*.

Another of my favorite wrecks was the *Akibasan Maru*. This large supply ship was bound for the Japanese seaplane base on Ebeye Island (next to Kwaj), when American planes bombed and sank it. Mark led the team down into the second hold and pointed out the large seaplane floats there. The fine silt on the floor of the hold makes a tremendous mess with even one misplaced fin kick. We stayed high up off the floor and did a pretty good job of keeping the viz clear. Then we swam forward through a crack in the bulkhead into the first hold where we could film seaplane wings. Except for the missing fabric, the wings look pretty good despite nearly 60 years underwater.

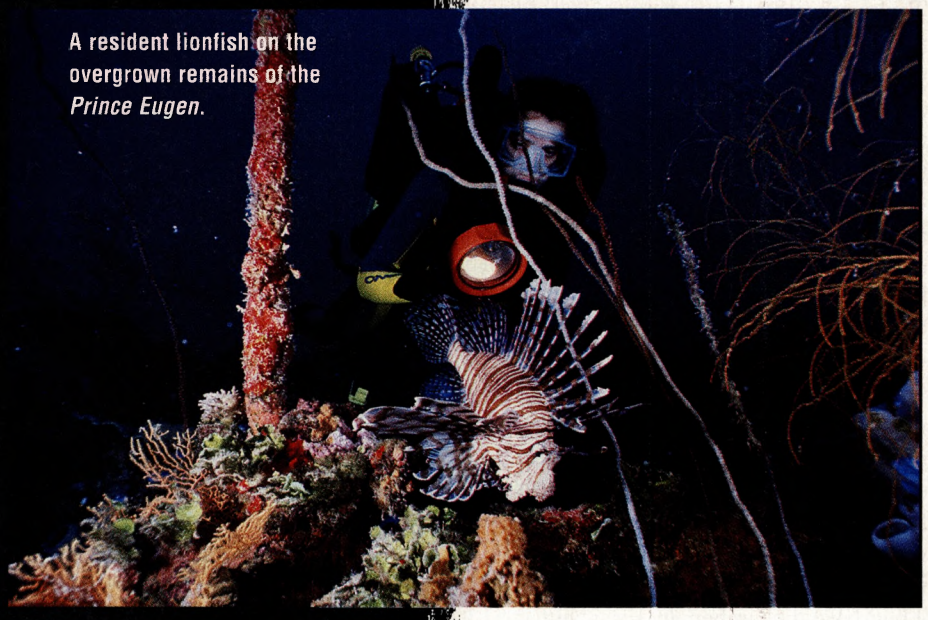
One could not mention the island of Kwajalein without mentioning its most famous shipwreck, the *Prinz Eugen* ("OY-gan"). This 697-foot German heavy cruiser actually had nothing to do with Japan or the battle on



Why would anyone want to go? How about *Tridacna* the size of suitcases, shipwrecks in reasonable depths everywhere, the greatest collection of WW II airplane wrecks anywhere and some of the prettiest reefs imaginable–all exclusively dived by the locals. Oh yeah, and did I mention sharks?



Lots of sharks.



A resident lionfish on the overgrown remains of the *Prince Eugen*.

The rebreathers make very few bubbles, which greatly reduces fallout. Furthermore, the minimal amount of noise they make is great for approaching marine life, like the lionfish on the *Daisan Maru*.



Pink Anemonefish and their host anemones dot the reef in flowing carpets of color.

Kwajalein. It was built by the Germans and engaged in its most famous battle with the British ship HMS *Hood*, alongside the *Bismarck*. Unlike the *Bismarck*, which the British sank, the *Prinz Eugen* survived through the end of the war. Eventually surrendered to the Americans, she was sailed to the U.S., retrofitted, then sailed to Bikini to be used as an atomic bomb guinea pig. Not one, but two atom bombs failed to sink the *Prinz Eugen* at Bikini, so they towed her to Kwaj for decontamination and study. Alas, she began taking on water at the dock, so they towed her out into the lagoon where the former pride of Nazi Germany flipped over and sank.

Today, "the *Eugen*" as the locals call her, remains one of the world's few dives on a military ship of this size. The massive 8-inch guns rest in the sand at 75 feet. Beds, bolted to floors, now hang from ceilings. The nazi markings can still be seen on the white enamel on the kitchen oven doors.

My assistant cameraman, Greg Brunshidle, made no bones about the fact that he is not a "wreck guy." He likes marine life and started referring to the wrecks as "litter." He finally said enough was enough and demanded to see a beautiful reef. Then Cliff chimed in and said that he flew halfway across the world and he wasn't going home until he saw a giant clam. Tom knew it was time to take the gang to Roi-Namur.

Roi-Namur, or just "Roi" to the residents, is an island in the northern part of the atoll, and also part of the military base. It has only about 200 people living on it, in contrast to the 1,500 on Kwaj. To divers, Roi is known for two things: gorgeous reefs and airplane wrecks.

Off Sand Island, a tiny sand spit in the lagoon near Roi, one can find some of the most perfect Pacific reefs in the world, complete with *Tridacna* up to 3 feet across, healthy coral and all kinds of amazing macro life. We anchored the boat in the sand near the reef, and Greg was in heaven. He ran his rebreather completely out of gas and switched to his bailout, using every possible minute of bottom time available in order to shoot a tiny goby and shrimp in a hole near the edge of the reef. When he switched to the snorkel, we finally pulled him out.

Speedball is perhaps the most popular dive site around Roi. It lies on the oceanside of the island near a place where they used to launch Speedball missiles, hence the strange name. At Speedball, a wall plunges to unimaginable depths, but there is a sandy shelf at 150 feet which is the gathering place for Gray Reef Sharks. No matter when you go, the sharks are there, swimming around in circles together. We dived down and they swam up to greet us out of curiosity, then sunk back down to the shelf to resume whatever it is that they do all day. Greg was first in the water, and he came back with a fantastic story about a hammerhead. He was unable to capture the beast on video to prove its existence, so we named the shark Elvis, and decided that a single sighting did not represent confirmation of its presence.

Imagine my surprise when I returned four months later to the island to finish the principal photography and heard the rumor around the island that hammerheads had been seen at Speedball. On a beautiful sunny day with crystal-clear blue water, I also saw Elvis, and he does live. But I didn't get any shots either. You'll just have to take my word for it.

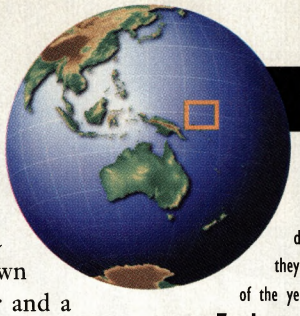
The airplane graveyard on Roi is pretty close to nirvana for me. At the

end of the war, the U.S. stripped all the good parts out of the scrapped planes on the Roi air base and dumped them into the ocean. To my fascination and delight, they decided to do it not more than 200 yards from the reef, inside the lagoon. On a single dive, I saw a B-25, a Corsair nose-down in the sand, a C-46 transport, an Avenger and a Dauntless SBD dive bomber. The B-25 fascinated me. When we first anchored, we could see it from the boat, 120 feet down, sitting perfectly level on the bottom. With its gear down, as if it is ready to take off, the plane looks like it could fly right now, were it not missing its props. Although there is a bit of coral growing on it, the aluminum skin of the plane is still fairly shiny.

My wife, Christine, who is the researcher for the film, spent a fair amount of time looking for a serial number on the Corsair. She eventually found an intact serial number for the vertical stabilizer sub-assembly, and we are hoping we can trace some information about the plane and where it went. I would welcome any experts on Corsairs to drop me a line on that one!

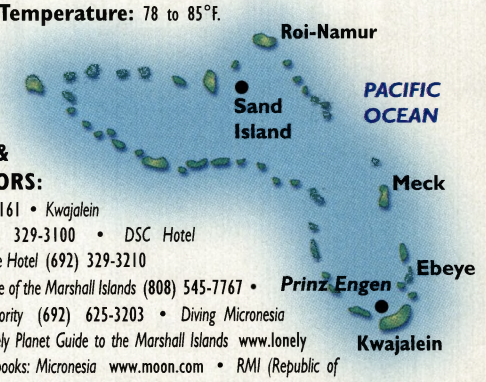
When our island time ran out and we had to leave, nobody wanted to go home. There were more reefs, wrecks and planes we didn't get to see. Even after diving every day for more than two months on Kwaj, I have a huge list of things I still want to do. The diving opportunities are amazing.

In recent years, the Republic of the Marshall Islands has been talking about trying to open Kwajalein Atoll to the public through Ebeye, a Marshallese island in the atoll. But the Marshallese infrastructure (dive boats, air-fills, clean accommodations, restaurants) is not really ready yet. Some day you might be able to dive Kwaj as a tourist, but until then, it's one of those things where you have to know someone on the inside. Believe me, it's worth the effort to make a new friend.



Skin Diver GUIDE • Kwajalein Atoll

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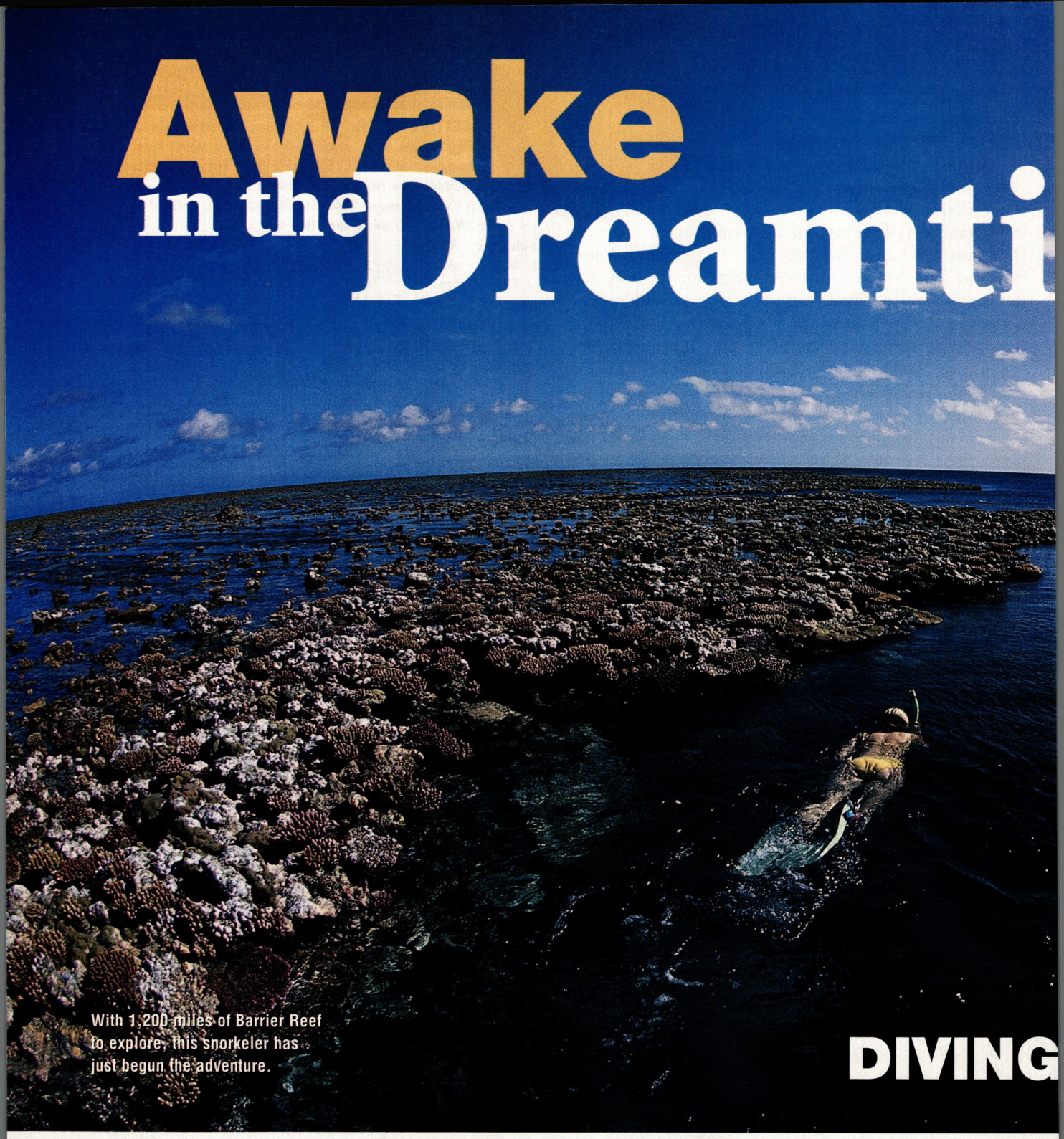


Special thanks to the Kwajalein Scuba Club and Roi-Namur Dolphins Scuba Club for providing air and location assistance for the project, C2 Expeditions for rebreather training, and the U.S. Army for permission to visit and access to island facilities.



Dauntless dive bomber at the Airplane Graveyard.

Awake in the Dreamti



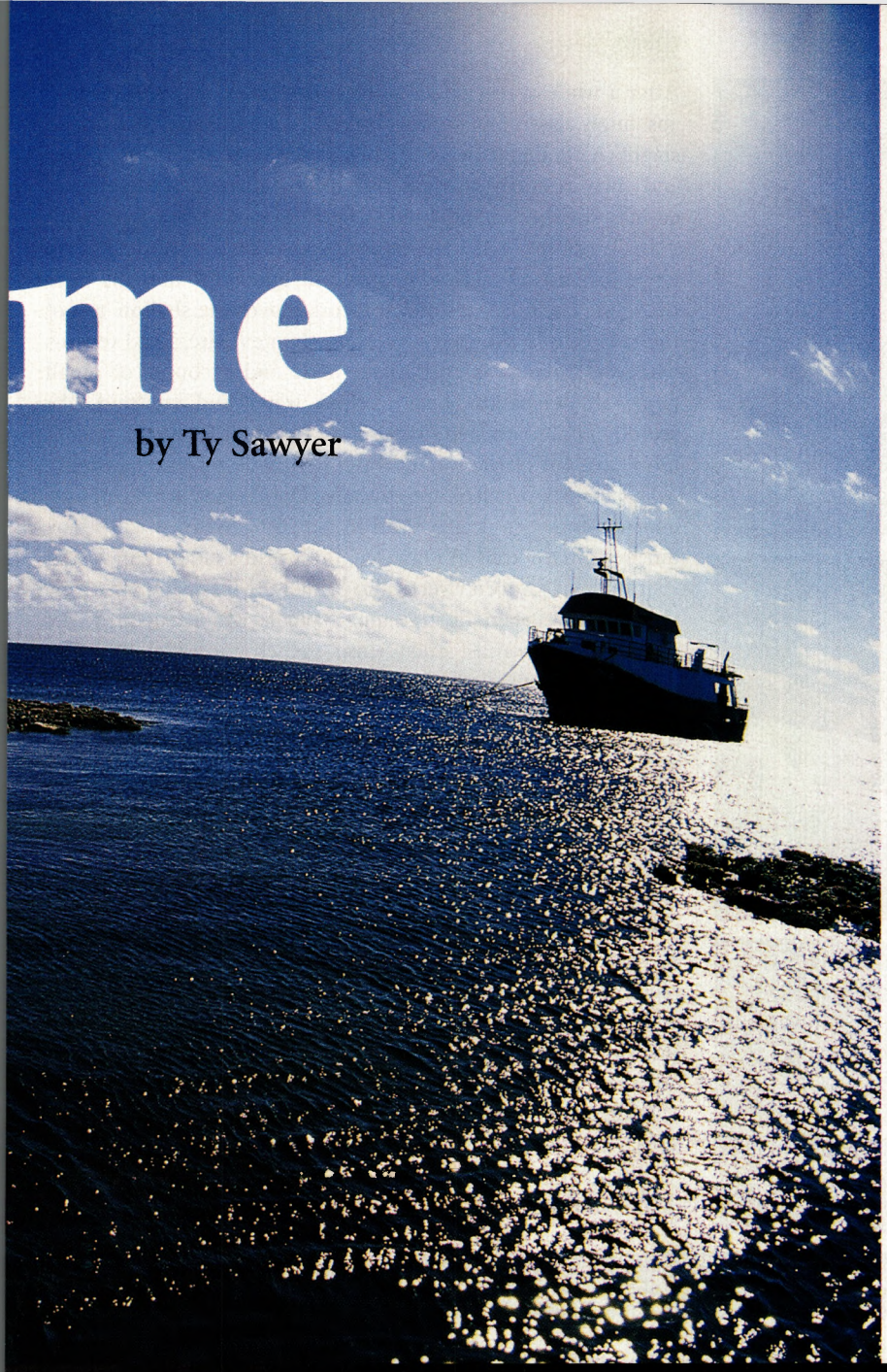
With 1,200 miles of Barrier Reef to explore, this snorkeler has just begun the adventure.

DIVING

In the beginning, the Rainbow Serpent, Bulurru, created the land and all that was upon it. This was the Dreamtime, a time before even the oldest man. The first baby was born of the swollen calf of Guyala and was suckled by Wongul Longul, who came down from the sky to feed the infant boy. At night, every person who came after is said to be connected to Creation through their dreams.

If they're lucky, those with C-cards will awaken, open their eyes and see before them the Earth's largest living organism, the Great Barrier Reef. Hidden away in its thousand

PHOTOS: MICHAEL AW



me

by Ty Sawyer

I'M TRAVELING WITH A GROUP OF WRITERS, most of whom aren't avid divers. A couple of them aren't even avid travelers and actually show up in Australia without credit cards (truly a moment for "Ripley's Believe it or Not"). Early on, another even professes she is, "not into the Barrier Reef and rain forested-out" and decides to go sarong shopping instead on our next sojourn.

After a couple of exasperating days, with my dive-jones aching and my travelers feet itching for some adventure, I pull underwater photographer Amos Nachoum (equally dismayed himself) aside and tell him we must mutiny, we must stowaway on a dive vessel and hope they honor our return ticket when we finally make our way back to the airport.

Leaving behind the sarong-etts, we take the bubble-blowing core of the group and make our way to Quicksilver's *Silverblue* day boat, leaving from Port Douglas in Tropical North Queensland. Finally among like-minded souls, we all stare across the early morning horizon of blue water, wondering what awaits our first giant stride. The slight breeze bears the smell of saltwater to ignite our desire. Brad, from the *New York Post*, has practically been geared up since we arrived, so much is his desire to wet his gills.

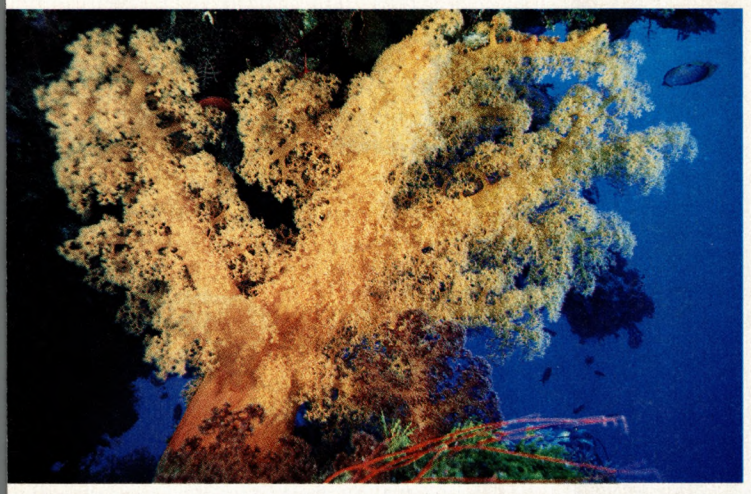
After a quick hour trip to the Agincourt Reef site on the barrier reef, we are all in the water almost before the anchor has settled. We drop over a shallow wall right into a huge school of Yellow Striped Snapper. Amos and I take turns swimming through the middle of it, causing the school to polarize around us into a circle of blue and gold.

AUSTRALIA'S STORY WATERS

miles of ancient blue wonderland are more than 4,000 marine creatures, from Minke Whales to Potato Cod to the tiniest of nudibranchs. When sleep overtakes you, your connection to Creation will pale in comparison to what has been created. And first light will not come soon enough. When you feel this, the diver within will cheer. For you have descended into Australia's Story Waters.



Common clownfish.







Ancient forests above and below. Clockwise from top: A soft coral seascape; the cookaburra in the old gum tree; a contemplative pool at Mossman Gorge.

After a while, a reef shark ambles past and slowly fins over an absolutely classic reef scene—bright red gorgonians, blue-tipped staghorn coral and fields of rope and leather coral. Anemones and their resident anemonefish bloom all over the reef, and anthias, fusiliers and others flow over the reef in clouds of color.

Back on the boat, we hydrate, change film and start to embellish our dives. Brad boards long enough to doff his tank, then gets back in the water to snorkel over the shallow top of the reef. While the boat motors to the next site, Brad tells us what we missed—a cuttlefish, turtle and a couple of small rays—all in shallow, bright, clean water and unafraid. We secretly curse him. He just smiles. We've all learned a lesson: Don't get out of the water. You'll definitely miss something.

But that's a problem, too. Because Queensland is also an outdoor adventurer's dream. And in between dives we will spook dingoes off the trail in Daintree, the world's oldest rain forest; visit the rain-swollen river at the primeval Mossman Gorge; see the famous curtain fig tree and 10-foot pythons deep in the Atherton Tablelands; and cruise the croc-infested saltwater rivers of the conspicuously-named Cape Tribulation.

But for now, we turn on our air and jump in for more. As I descend, a large form passes me. It turns out to be a large Green Turtle. I decide to spend a day-in-the-life with the big guy, so I nonchalantly shadow the turtle for the next 55 minutes as it makes a grid pattern over the reef. Turns out to be the jackpot move of the day as all his friends wait to greet us along the way. A big turquoise-colored, calf-sized Maori Wrasse circles a few times, and groups of Mardi Gras-colored fairy basslets pop out of the carnival-hued hard corals. It is like passing through the rainbow's end. We see fields strewn with *Tridacna* of all sizes, with mantles painted in swirling, topographically designed shades of blue or brown. Looking closely, I can spot tiny symbiotic shrimp and crabs, stealthily evolved to blend in.

Later, while doing a safety stop under the boat, I hear a splash overhead. Looking up, I see Brad. This time, though, in his rush to get to the shallows, he misses a large school of barracuda moving in the opposite direction. I can't wait to tell him.

PHOTOS (CLOCKWISE FROM TOP): MICHAEL AW, TY SAWYER, MICHAEL AW. OPPOSITE PAGE (TOP TO BOTTOM): AMOS NACHOUM, MICHAEL AW

Skin Diver GUIDE AUSTRALIA

GETTING THERE: *Air New Zealand* (800) 262-1234 www.airnz.com • *Qantas Airways* www.qantas.com

FACTS AND TIPS: Best Time To Visit: Topside Climate: In the north (Cairns vicinity), temps average 86°F during summer months (Dec. to March); and average 75°F during winter months (June to Sept.). It's slightly cooler in South Queensland. **Water Temperature:** Varies as much as 10°F by season. Averages 80°F from Cairns to the north, and 75°F off Heron Island. **Exchange Rate:** 1.00 (USD) = 1.95 (AUD). U.S. dollar is easily accepted. **Time Difference:** EST plus 14 hours.

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RESORTS, DIVE OPERATORS: Auriga Bay II www.reefcruises.com.au • *Deep Sea Divers Den/Oceanquest* www.divers-den.com • *Diversion Dive Travel* www.diversionOZ.com • *Down Under Dive* www.downunderdive.com.au • *Explorer Ventures* (800) 322-3577 www.explorerventures.com • *Heron Island* (800) 255-9849 www.poresorts.com.au • *Pro Dive Cairns* www.prodive-cairns.com.au • *Quicksilver* www.quicksilver-cruises.com • *Reef Magic Cruises Pty. Ltd.* www.reef-magic.com.au • *Serica Dive Charters* www.sericadiveaustralia.com • *Tusa Dive Connection* www.tusadive.com

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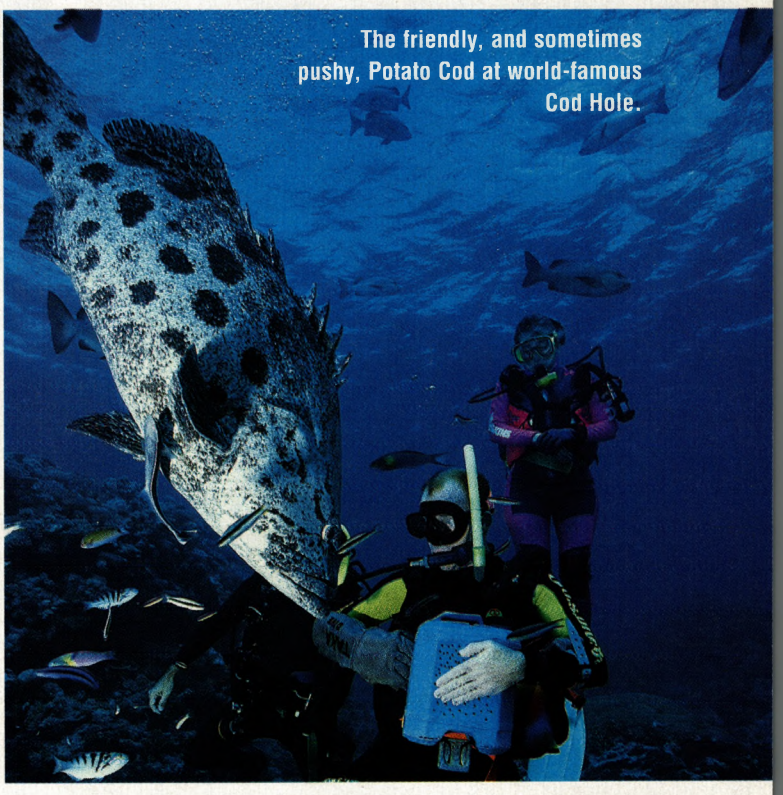
Thala Beach Resort

Designed to meld with the rain forest, the bungalows at Thala are all but invisible from the main road. The resort is situated between Cairns and Port Douglas and has the feel of a true rain forest getaway. The entire resort was designed to impact the area as little as possible. As a result, the area abounds with wildlife. On my first morning, I awake early and just below my balcony, several wallaby hop and forage their way through the forest. The trees surrounding the restaurant are filled with lorikeets and cookaburra. On a walk through a forest trail next to the resort, we see a small group of dingoes and an owl catch a small rodent. And snakes, both dangerous and not, slither around the property and are often seen crossing the pathways. Cool bugs, like rhinoceros beetles, crawl about in the underbrush. The soft sand beach seems to stretch for miles with not another person in sight.

On our return trip to our home base at Thala Beach Resort, we stop by an aboriginal cultural show about the origins of local Tjapukai people. During a presentation, the native actors start a fire with efficiency that would make a *Survivor* contestant weep. But when I hear the raw, deep tones of the native instrument, the *didgeridoo* (a wind instrument made of a termite-hollowed stick), I'm taken into the rhythm of the land. Anytime you see a nature show on Australia, it's the musical instrument you hear in the background. They say you don't buy a didge, it buys you. I leave with one that sings my tune, and I play it deep into the night for the spirits of the forest.

By sun-up the next morning (and for the next few mornings), the wet-bunch boards one of the day boats run by TUSA out of Cairns, headed to Hastings Reef, a 45-minute ride away. You can spend days diving here among the thickets of staghorn coral, with impressive schools of damsels, anthias and Sweetlips. Going along the wall, I encounter a massive giant clam with its iridescent, earth-toned mantle. Farther on is a swim-through that leads up into the reef, where paired-up butterflyfish and multi-hued angelfish bring a color overload to the saturated reef vista. Heading out from the wall and over the sandy bottom, there are several Whitetip Reef Sharks tucked under the overhangs and Bluespotted Rays foraging in the sand. The most compelling thing about the Barrier Reef is that every dive is a trek of discovery.

After our days of diving and exploring Australia's ancient lands, we meet up at Thala Beach for dinner with the entire group. The sarong-etts proudly display their shopping scores, while we trade stories of encounters with everything from giant Potato Cod and color-shifting cuttlefish, to snakes, lorikeets and crocodiles. We have explored reefs packed with marine life of all manner and forests full of the secrets and sounds of ancient peoples. The sarong-etts simply pick up their bags and head off to their bungalows. They've missed an adventure of a lifetime.



The friendly, and sometimes pushy, Potato Cod at world-famous Cod Hole.

Special thanks to TicketPlanet.com.

anything but

Off the East coast of Africa in the Indian Ocean, rise the granite peaks of a sinking mountain range, a remnant of the ancient supercontinent of Pangaea. It is a place where bats take to the air with wingspans nearing 3 feet, spiders the size of your fist catch prey as big as birds, and herds of giant tortoise roam the plains like dinosaurs. It is a place that time forgot. They call this archipelago the Seychelles.

Among the 115 islands spread out over 600,000 square miles, there is one that stands out above the rest—Aldabra. Less visited than Antarctica or even Everest, it is the most remote of the Seychelles Islands. There are few places on Earth as inaccessible as this. It is the Galapagos of the East, and it was my expedition's goal.

Remembering my childhood, romping through the backyard, I used to pretend that I was on some grand adventure. I would imagine myself fighting off sharks, hiking through the jungle, climbing high peaks—all in the name of discovery. Although the mulch pile doesn't seem like such a high peak anymore, I still haven't outgrown those yearnings to explore. That is why I became a photojournalist.

jurassic park

From the plane window, I got my first glimpse of the magnificent granite peaks of Mahé, the main island of the Seychelles. Right away I was enchanted by the exotic beauty of these unique islands. Lush vegetation covered most of the steep hillsides, except for the highest elevations, where bare granite, worn smooth by the elements, formed mysterious shapes. With such a primordial backdrop, I half expected to see pterodactyls circling the peaks.

Once on the ground, I wanted to explore both the mountains and the cities, but I didn't have time. I boarded the *Indian Ocean Explorer* the next morning for its biannual expedition to Aldabra. Only about 300 lucky people set foot on this island each year, and I was going to be one of them.

We left Mahé behind on a perfectly flat, cobalt blue sea. With 750 miles to go and a hundred rolls of film to shoot, the adventure had officially begun. I took one last, long look at civilization. It would be two weeks before I saw it again, but I wouldn't miss it. I was already slipping on my wetsuit.



The otherworldly landscape at La Digue.

text and photography by ethan gordon

ordinary EXPEDITION TO ALDABRA

For a warm-up dive, we jumped in at a wreck called the *Ennerdale*. As soon as we entered the water, a pod of wild dolphins approached us nose to nose. When their curiosity was satiated, they bid us *adieu*. Even without that encounter, the 100-foot plus visibility, Eagle Rays, anemone fish and more had made it a great first dive.

For the next seven days we explored the islands along the way to Aldabra. In contrast to the exposed granite peaks of the main islands (Mahé, La Digue and Praslin) the outer islands were raised coral atolls. Many of them offered sheer drop-offs to dive on the outside and lagoons to explore on the inside.

the consummate cosmoledo

Using the inflatable as an amphibious landing craft, we visited the bird colonies, witnessed turtles nesting, and found rare species of spiders. The most fun we had was exploring the lagoons of these atolls. Generally the lagoons weren't deep enough to warrant scuba gear, but from the inflatable we saw thousands of young fish, rays and sharks swimming around in nature's nursery. This scene was repeated at many of the islands that we visited, but of all the islands on the way to Aldabra, Cosmoledo impressed me the most.

On land, the birds ruled Cosmoledo with bustling, squawking colonies of both red-footed and masked boobies. Unafraid of humans, some of the boobies perched on driftwood held up by the ship's crew. Underwater, her reefs were alive with hard and soft coral of every size, shape and color. An enormous variety of tropical fish and invertebrates of incredible size had made their homes there. We found one Spanish Dancer over 15 inches long. It was so big that I think I witnessed rival families of Emperor Shrimp having a border dispute on its back.

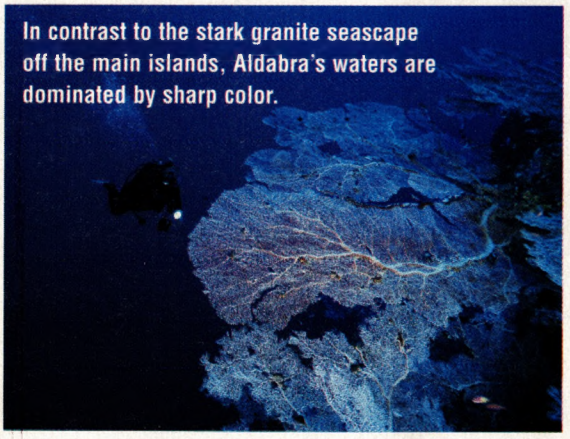
The diversity of life on the reef at Cosmoledo was simply incredible by any standard. Before I left on this trip, I had heard talk of the poor condition of the coral in the Indian Ocean due to the last El Niño. But nature is resilient and resourceful. Cold water upwellings protected much of the coral, and colonies of new coral were repopulating the reefs that had been affected. And Cosmoledo was not only undamaged, it was in perfect condition.

We did one final night dive at Cosmoledo, pulled anchor and headed for Aldabra. That night I rested in the comfort of my air-conditioned cabin, with my own private bath (all cabins have them). My head just inches from the porthole, the warm tropical waters of the Indian Ocean beckoned to me. From time to time, I opened my eyes and looked out across the moonlit waves and felt the steady vibration of the engines. It meant we were going somewhere, somewhere far from civilization. Finally I fell asleep, dreaming of the deep and the countless, unknown creatures that passed under our hull during the night.

alas...aldabra

The next morning I awoke like a kid on Christmas Day, eager to get my first glimpse of this fabled land. Arabic in origin, Aldabra may have meant "green" for the lagoon that it is famous for. I just sat there taking it all in.

"You going to sit there and stare all day, or are we going diving?" asked David Rowat, manager of the *Indian Ocean Explorer*. "Come," he said, "the tide waits for no man."

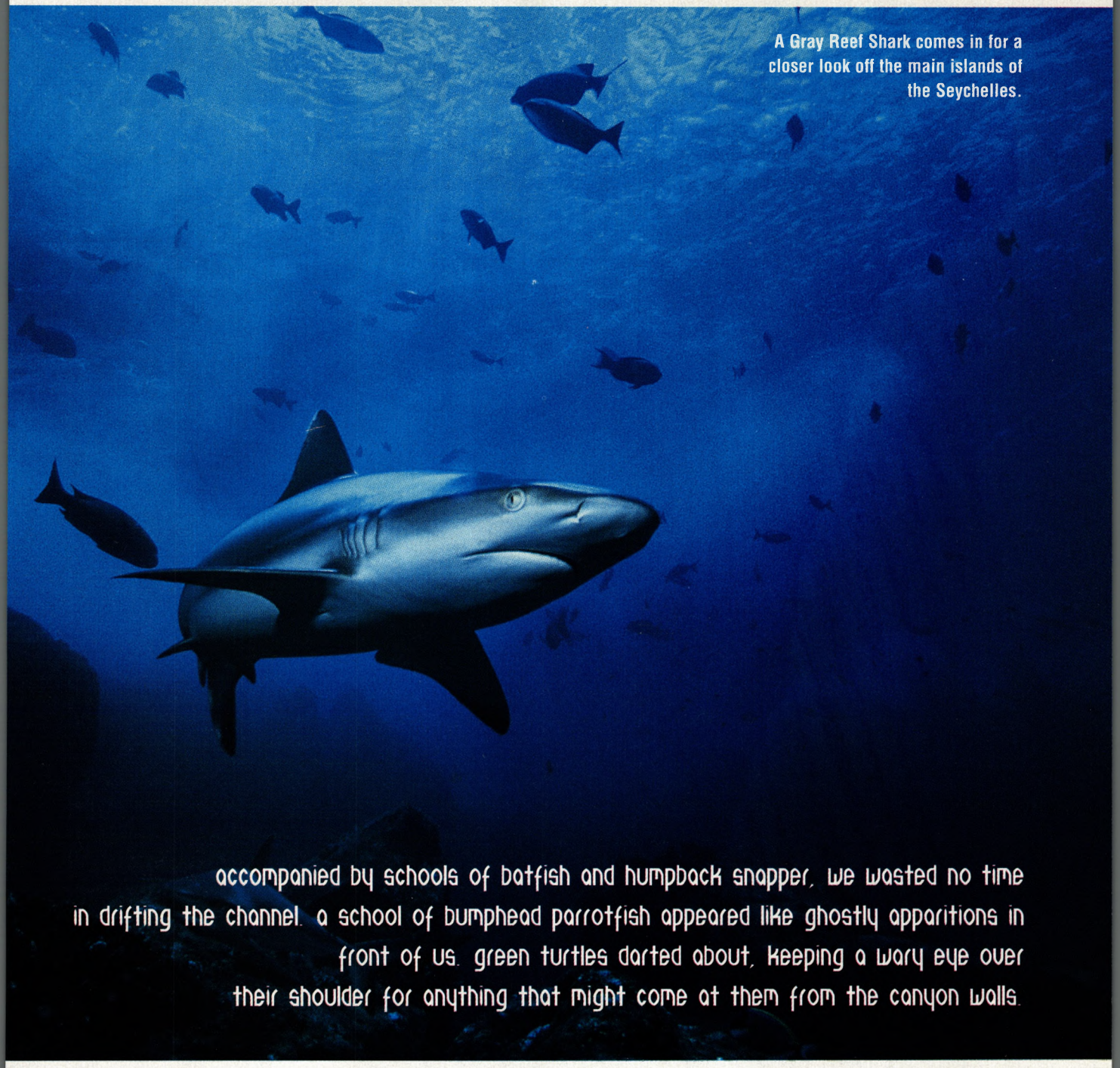


In contrast to the stark granite seascape off the main islands, Aldabra's waters are dominated by sharp color.

The tides certainly didn't wait for anything as they filled and emptied Aldabra's 55-square-mile lagoon twice a day. The entirety of that water moved in and out through only four channels, the majority of it through just one, very narrow, 100-foot-deep channel. Any creature wanting to get in or out of the lagoon had to run the gauntlet of six- to eight-knot currents and myriad predators waiting in ambush along the canyon walls of the Main Channel. This was the highlight of diving Aldabra.



Accompanied by schools of batfish and Humpback Snapper, we wasted no time in drifting the channel. A school of Bumphead Parrotfish appeared like ghostly apparitions in front of us. Green Turtles darted about, keeping a wary eye over their shoulder for anything that might come at them from the canyon walls. Giant Potato Cod waited behind twisted sculptures of limestone carved by the endless tides. It was a



A Gray Reef Shark comes in for a closer look off the main islands of the Seychelles.

accompanied by schools of batfish and humpback snapper, we wasted no time in drifting the channel. a school of bumphead parrotfish appeared like ghostly apparitions in front of us. green turtles darted about, keeping a wary eye over their shoulder for anything that might come at them from the canyon walls.

surreal experience. One we would repeat several times during our visit.

postcards

After a couple of dives, I was anxious to see more of the island that I had heard so much about. It was our plan to visit the small settlement where several scientists, the park ranger and their support staff live. They are the only human residents on Aldabra.

Due to the low tide, we couldn't land the inflatable at the settlement beach, so we decided to try the back entrance, through the West Channel. But with the tide so low, we needed to wade through the lagoon the rest of the way. Walking between 10-foot-tall mushroom-like coral formations, I was lost in the midst of an alien landscape.

We found the trail and had started toward the settlement when we heard a loud crashing noise coming from the trees ahead of us. Twigs and branches snapped and groaned until they finally gave way to nature's Sherman Tank, a 200-pound giant land tortoise. It didn't seem to notice us as it ambled through our group on its way to graze. Aldabra has a resident giant land tortoise population of about 150,000—10 times more than Galapagos.

Also from the trail, we spotted an Aldabra fruit bat hanging upside down from a low tree branch. With its furry white face, it was no wonder they are also called flying foxes. In fact, it not only looked a lot like a fox with wings, it was about the same size. When it finally got tired of my shutter snapping, the 747 of bats took to the air to find a quieter hangout. I think it probably appeared as a blip on some

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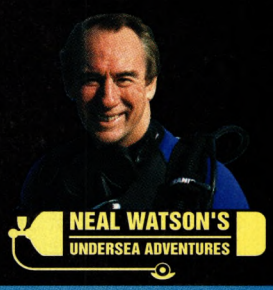
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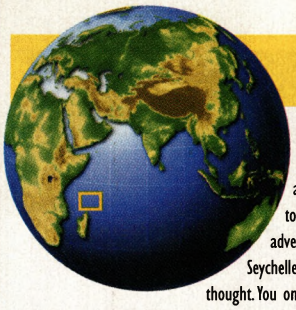
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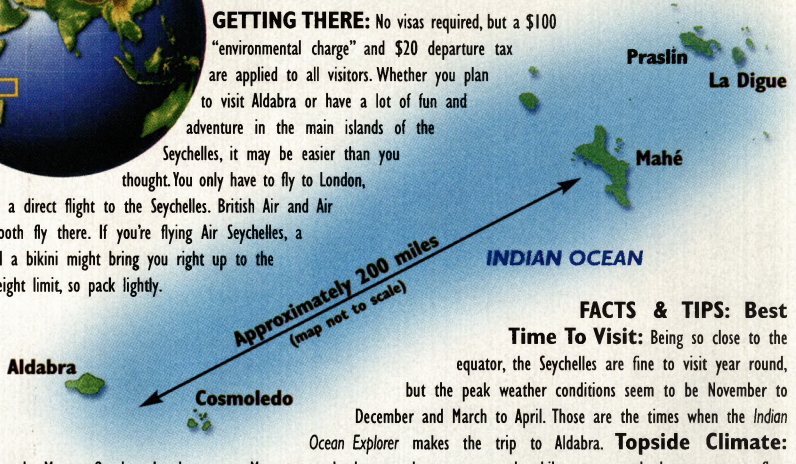
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Skin Diver GUIDE • seychelles

GETTING THERE: No visas required, but a $100 "environmental charge" and $20 departure tax are applied to all visitors. Whether you plan to visit Aldabra or have a lot of fun and adventure in the main islands of the Seychelles, it may be easier than you thought. You only have to fly to London, then board a direct flight to the Seychelles. British Air and Air Seychelles both fly there. If you're flying Air Seychelles, a snorkel and a bikini might bring you right up to the baggage weight limit, so pack lightly.



FACTS & TIPS: Best Time To Visit: Being so close to the equator, the Seychelles are fine to visit year round, but the peak weather conditions seem to be November to December and March to April. Those are the times when the *Indian Ocean Explorer* makes the trip to Aldabra. **Topside Climate:** Tradewinds make May to October the dry season. Monsoons make January the wettest month, while every month the temperature fluctuates between 75 and 88°F, and the humidity stays around 80%. **Water Temperature:** 82 to 84°F. **Exchange Rate:** $1.00 US = 5.61 SCR (Seychelles Rupee). **Time Difference:** EST plus nine hours.

LIVE-ABOARDS, DIVE OPERATORS & RESORTS: *Coral Strand Hotel* www.coralstrand.com • Indian Ocean Explorer (888) 437-8456 www.ioexplorer.com

RESOURCES: *UK Seychelles Tourist Office* 44-20-8741-6262 www.seychelles.uk.com • *Underwater Centre Seychelles* www.diveseychelles.com.sc • *Lonely Planet Guide to Seychelles* www.lonelyplanet.com • *Skin Diver Online* www.skin-diver.com

airport's radar screen.

We finally made it to the research station in time for the sunset. We watched as the sun, sinking into the sea, illuminated distant storms on the horizon. Meanwhile, nearer to shore, the fins of dozens of Blacktip Sharks cut the mirror-like surface of the water just off the beach. These sharks are the constant companions of the scientists that live there.

For the rest of the week, I photographed those Blacktip Sharks, the Main and West Channel dives, Eagle Rays, tropical fish and more unusual nudibranchs underwater. Above, we explored the alien terrain of these fossilized coral islands and the enormous lagoon. For a nature lover, it was an overdose of stimuli.

buzz kill

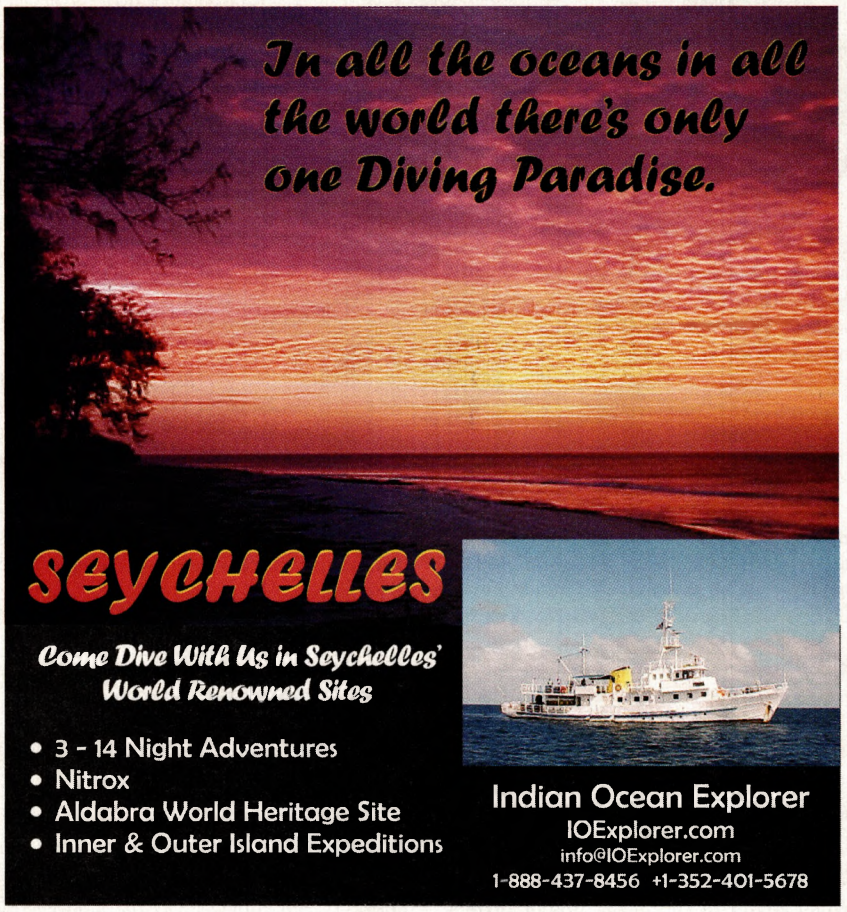
Before I knew it, I was flying in the chartered plane back to Mahé. The trip that had taken us a week by water took only two and a half hours by air.

The adventure had to come to an end. Indeed, I had fought off sharks (or at least photographed them), hiked through jungles and encountered alien animals, but once again it was time to return to that mulch pile in my driveway and wait for the next call to the wild.

Special thanks to David Rowat and the Indian Ocean Explorer, *the Coral Strand Hotel, Glynis Sanders and the Underwater Centre Seychelles.*



A Marbled Eel shows its good side for all the world to see.





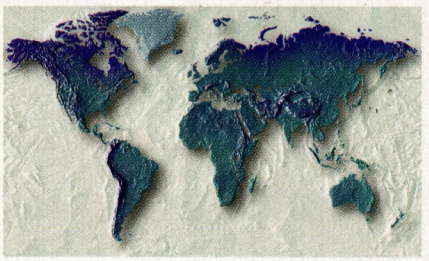
SKINDIVERONLINE

BY MICHELLE DANNER

Dive the World

IF YOU'RE LIKE ME, YOU DREAM of one day seeing the entire world. You look at your globe, spin it around and point out tiny islands in the middle of the great oceans, wondering, *What's it like there? What is the culture like? What is the diving like? How the heck would I get there?*

And if you're like me, you want an easy answer. You want to look in one place to find out everything. The web has made travel easier, but Skin Diver Online's (SDO) Dive Atlas of the World has made it simple.



The Dive Atlas of the World is a comprehensive world map to diving. It is separated into 12 sections: East Coast of the United States, Tropical Atlantic, Caribbean, Western Americas, Central Pacific, Western Pacific, Red Sea, South Africa, Indian Ocean, Southeast Asia, Coral Sea and South Pacific. Each section details numerous dive locations and has links to resorts and dive operators.

The web has made travel easier, but Skin Diver Online's Dive Atlas of the World has made it simple.

If you need even more information on a specific dive destination, you can also check out SDO's travel section. With archived *Skin Diver* articles, take a virtual trip with any one of *Skin Diver*'s travel writers. Simply click on your desired location, and you'll be on your way to your next dive vacation, whether it's a small island in the South Pacific or a short drive from home.

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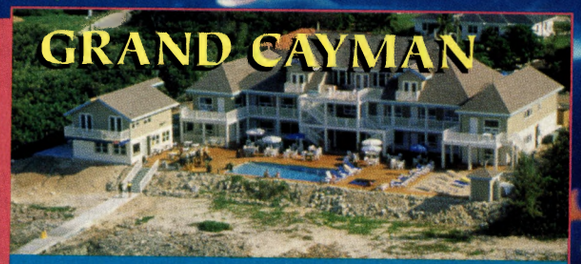
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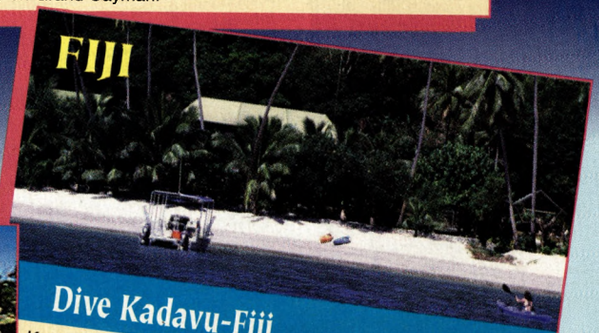
Big Blue Explorer – Palau

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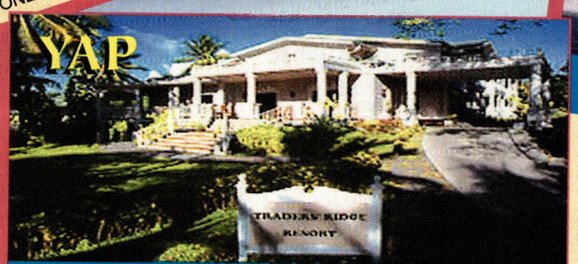
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The newest dedicated dive resort on Grand Cayman. Located away from the hustle & bustle of 7 Mile Beach in the quiet northwest corner of the island! The best shorediving in Grand Cayman is located directly in front of the resort and of course unlimited shorediving included in the dive packages, 2 tank morning boat dives included and afternoon dives available. Swimming pool, Jacuzzi, full service restaurant & bar directly on property. Made to order breakfast daily included in dive packages. There is not a better dedicated-dive property on Grand Cayman!



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HammerHeads Keep the Dive Memories Alive With Underwater Photography

THE NEW YEAR IS HERE, AND in addition to welcoming 2002 with a variety of upcoming dive events, the HammerHeads have created an exciting new underwater imaging program that will capture the memories of the past and the memories-to-be of the future. With the help of sponsors Kodak and Sea & Sea Underwater Photography, this program shows members the fun and ease of capturing dive memories through photography.

To kick-off the program, all chapters were encouraged to select one member to take on the role as the official Head Snapper—the member who is the biggest photography enthusiast. Head Snapper duties include offering photo advice and tips during dive events, working with select Sea & Sea retailers to host educational workshops, and identifying and helping to coordinate fun underwater photography dive trips.

Members can visit www.h-heads.com and go to the HammerHeads online newsletter, Shark Bites, for the underwater imaging tip of the month.

For more information on the HammerHeads or the Head Snapper program, please contact Lydia Eldridge at (858) 616-6408, or e-mail her at lydiae@dema.org.

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Rec. Divers of Rochester

SINCE ITS FOUNDING in 1977, Rec. Divers of Rochester, NY, has been involved in numerous dive trips, fundraising activities and community outreach events. They've held scuba swapmeets, corresponded with legislative leaders over important dive-related legal issues, and helped spread the word about diving and dive safety.

Rec. Divers is an active club, with more than 20 dive-related functions each dive season. Last year's planned dives included a Niagara River drift dive; Lake Erie; a seal dive in Glouster, MA; and trips to North Carolina and Ontario, Canada, among other destinations. Through fundraising and membership dues, the club's treasury often helps fund club trips. On extended trips (typically a weekend or longer), the club frequently underwrites a portion of the costs. On shorter trips, it might choose to pay for air used on the dives.

During the off-season, Rec. Divers normally offers talks on dive technologies, equipment, trends and travel. The club also takes part in other activities that include members' non-diving friends and family, such as wine-tasting tours, picnics and campouts.

Members can attend monthly meetings and receive a monthly newsletter. In addition, the club publishes *The Dive Book*, a guide to local scuba diving.

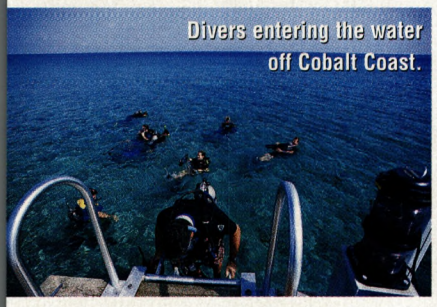
For more info, visit www.ggw.org/recdivers.

Send your club news to allenr@primediacmmg.com.

Cayman Celebrates the Seas

ONE OF THE WORLD'S MOST DESIRABLE destinations among scuba divers is the Cayman Islands, and come January 19 to 26, 2002, the three-island nation plays host to a major diving extravaganza called "Celebration of the Seas." Industry professionals and manufacturers will gather to show off the hottest new equipment and dive gear, while dive enthusiasts can enjoy seminars and demonstrations led by such luminaries as oceanographer Jean-Michel Cousteau and acclaimed underwater photographer Cathy Church.

Celebration of the Seas brings together dive equipment manufacturers, training organizations and retailers. Dive enthusiasts can learn about the latest techniques or contribute to the issues of the day, as well as test the latest gear and equipment, while enjoying some of the best diving the world has to offer. Among the many options are boat dives, night dives, shore diving, technical dives and underwater photography. Divers can also choose between full certification and resort courses. A gala dinner honoring inductees into the


Divers entering the water off Cobalt Coast.

International Scuba Diving Hall of Fame caps the week's activities.

"We're very pleased to host what we hope will become a fixture on everyone's annual dive calendar," said Pilar Bush, Director of U.S. Sales and Marketing at the Department of Tourism. "We couldn't think of a more exciting backdrop for enthusiasts of the sport to meet, develop the spirit of camaraderie and enhance their knowledge and skill of scuba diving than in the Cayman Islands."

Celebration of the Seas will offer morning seminars, mini exhibits, demonstration boats and evening parties, as well as a film festival sponsored by *Skin Diver* magazine and a lively island-style concert.

"This event is not just for the grown-ups," says Bush. "There's a host of fun activities that will certainly capture the attention of the kids and keep them entertained both in and out of the water."


Exploring the Aquarium off Grand Cayman.

One activity that children can experience is SASY (Supplied Air Snorkeling for Youth) which allows the little ones from as young as six to experience the underwater world with a buoyancy device that eliminates the need for the traditional snorkel.

To book a "Celebration of the Seas" dive package, call (866) 7-CAYMAN or visit www.divecayman.ky/celebration for more information.

PHOTOS: TY SAWYER

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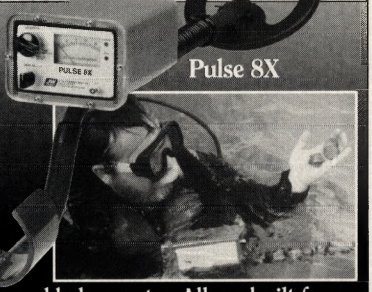
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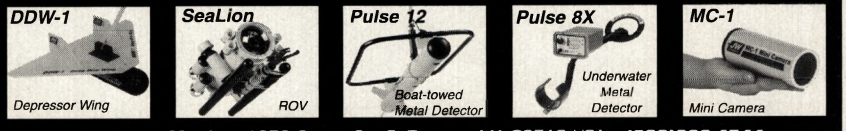
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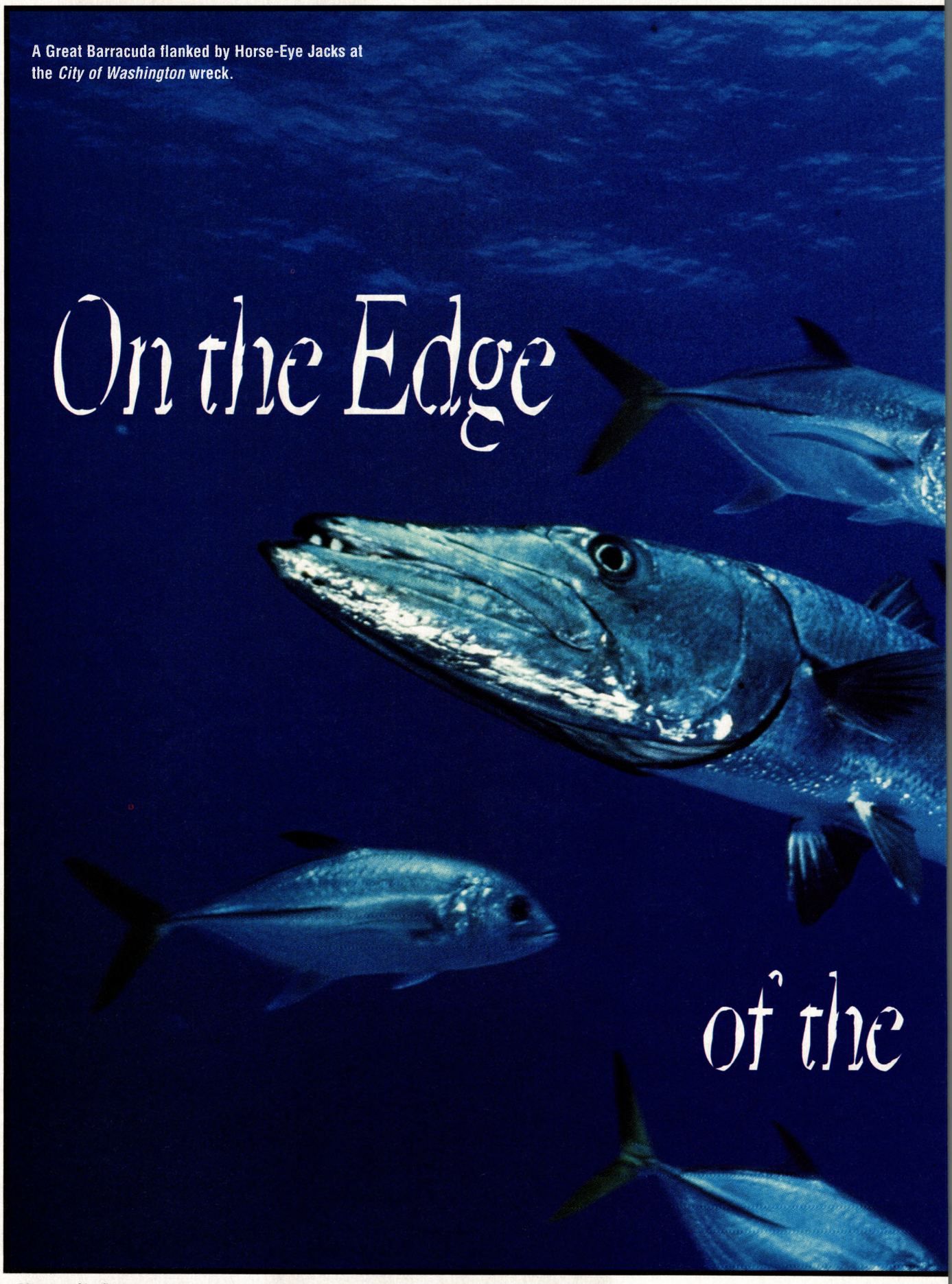
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A Great Barracuda flanked by Horse-Eye Jacks at the *City of Washington* wreck.

On the Edge of the



Stream

text and photography by Marty Snyderman

I was in Key Largo, Florida, as a cinematographer for the Discovery Channel, when I filmed a wonderful encounter at a cleaning station. A gathering of cleaner gobies provided services to several large barracuda, a Nassau Grouper, a chub and a variety of snapper. That day, I was able to work from only a foot or so away from the wide open mouth of a barracuda, while the gobies darting about inside of the 'cuda's mouth as the cleaner worked between those savage fangs.

As impressed as I was by that set of dental hardware, I was becoming equally impressed with our shoot location. Prior to working on this film, I had not dived Key Largo and mistakenly thought of the Pennecamp Park area as the only diving there. I envisioned scenes of snorkelers at the Christ of the Abyss statue, shallow, easily diveable reefs and colorful schools of snappers and grunts by the thousands. I knew the area would be pretty, but I did not expect big animals, nor did I expect my adrenaline to flow. I was blown away by the variety of fish, and not just the small, colorful species. Every day we saw Caribbean Reef Sharks, Nurse Sharks, tarpon, Jewfish or Southern Stingrays. There were big Green Morays, Spotted Morays, schools of Horse-eye Jacks, snappers, Atlantic Spadefish, big groupers and so much more. In fact, more than 500 species of fish inhabit the surrounding reefs.

After we had the cleaning footage in the can, we dived again that night with hopes of filming a barracuda "sleeping." (Actually, 'cudas don't sleep, at least not as we know it. Instead, they sometimes enter a state of "torpor," in which they zonk out in what seems to be a fog that is between consciousness and sleep.) It was close to 10:00 P.M. by the time we had the boat positioned, the camera loaded and the lights in the water. As soon as I slipped in, I saw a school of baitfish swarming in front of the movie lights, which were suspended below the boat. As I swam down to grab the lights, a silver torpedo shot through the school, which promptly scattered helter-skelter. I thought I



A Porkfish on the move.



Christ of the Abyss.

heard a loud crunch as the "torpedo" struck its target, then I noticed a bunch of scales floating in the water just in front of the lights. At about the same time, I realized that the torpedo was one of several barracudas lurking in the distant shadows. No doubt about it, the real life game of predator and prey was underway.

For the next 45 minutes, the 'cudas worked the baitfish. The school seemed drawn to the combination of the boat's anchoring lights and my movie lights, but continuously moved, swarming, tightening, scattering and regrouping as it went. All the while, a handful of hungry 'cudas worked the school by making sudden rushes from above, below, in front and to the side.

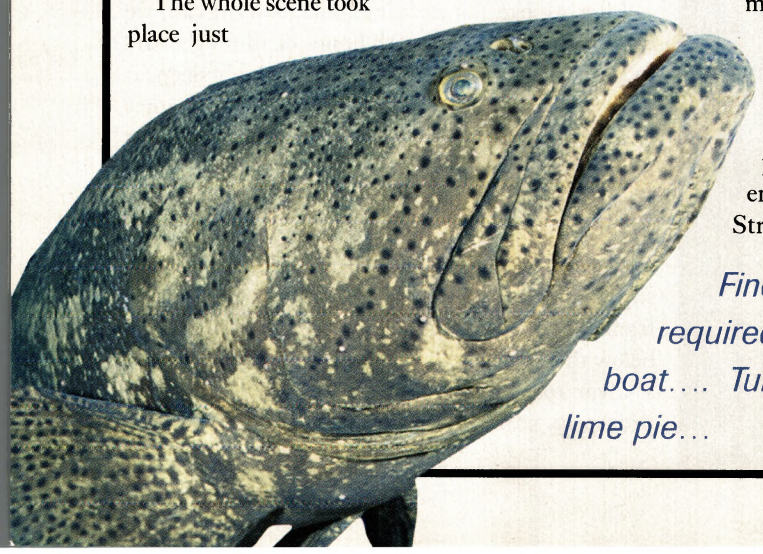
The whole scene took place just above the wreck of the *City of Washington*, a once proud, two-masted sailing ship that served U.S. forces during the Spanish-American War in 1898, before finally meeting her fate years later. Today, the wreck is one of Key Largo's most popular dive sites. The 325-foot-long wreck rests in roughly 25 feet of water at a site known as The Elbow. This area is so named because this "bend in the reef" makes it the closest to the Gulf Stream, and as a result, clear, blue water is very common. It is the proximity and influence of the Gulf Stream that yields so much life in the reef communities off Key Largo.



It's hard to imagine Key Largo without thinking about Spencer Slate's fish-feeding exploits. For many years, I had seen images of Slate feeding Ballyhoo to barracuda by taking his second stage out of his mouth and replacing it with the bait. This scene has become synonymous with diving in Key Largo.

And Slate's performance doesn't end with barracudas. He regularly feeds several large Nurse Sharks, Green Morays, groupers and snappers as well. He does so in an effort to help divers relax around these animals and understand that these creatures are a long way from the myths of ancient sea lore and modern-day television.

Ranging from Carysfort Reef to the east and Molasses Reef to the west, 11 of Key Largo's most popular dive sites lie in a narrow, 20-miles-long, 2-miles-wide strip within the bounds of the Key Largo National Marine Sanctuary. The sites on the inner

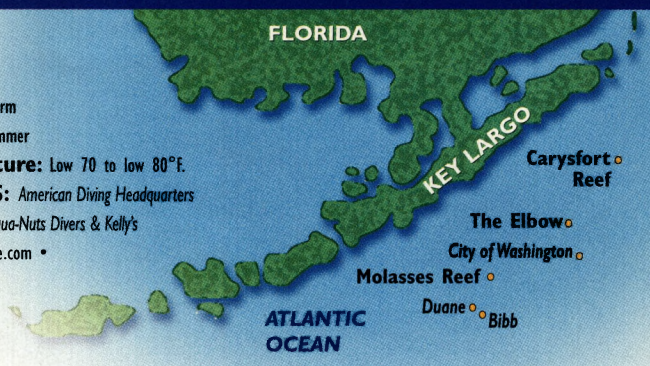




Finding an active cleaning station required little more than falling off the boat.... Turtles were as common as key lime pie...



Skin Diver GUIDE • Key Largo, Florida



GETTING THERE: Key Largo is roughly an hour south of the Miami airport. Most divers just drive down.

FACTS & TIPS: Best Time To Visit: Year-round; but storm season culminates in August and September. **Topside Climate:** Summer months average 85°F; winter months average mid-70s; **Water Temperature:** Low 70 to low 80°F. **Exchange Rate:** U.S. dollar. **Time Difference:** EST. **RESORTS & DIVE OPERATORS:** *American Diving Headquarters* (800) 634-8464 www.americandiving.com • *Amy Slate's Amoray Dive Resort* (800) 4-AMORAY www.amoray.com • *Aqua-Nuts Divers & Kelly's on the Bay* (800) 226-0415 www.aqua-nuts.com • *Capt. Slate's Atlantis Dive Center* (800) 331-3483 www.captainslate.com • *Coral Reef Park* (305) 451-6322 www.pennecamppark.com • *Divers Direct Outlet* (305) 451-0815 www.diversdirect.com • *Dixie Divers* (800) FLA-DIVE www.dixiedivers.com • *Horizon Divers* (800) 984-DIVE www.horizondivers.com • *It's A Dive* (800) 809-9881 www.itsadive.com • *Key Largo Undersea Park* (Home of Jules Undersea Lodge) (305) 451-2353 www.jul.com • *Ocean Divers* (800) 451-1113 www.oceandivers.com *Paradise Charters of Key* (305) 453-0909 www.paradisecharters.net • *Quiesence Diving Services* (305) 451-2440 www.quiesence.com • *Scuba Network* (800) 935-DIVE www.scubanetwork.com *Sea Dwellers Dive Center* (800) 451-3640 www.sea-dwellers.com • *Seafarer Fish & Dive Resort* (800) 599-7712 www.keylargoparadise.com • *Silent World Dive Center* (800) 966-3483 www.silentworldkeylargo.com • *World Watersports* (305) 451-0118 www.worldwatersports.com

RESOURCES: *Florida Tourism Board* www.flausa.com • *Skin Diver Online* www.skin-diver.com

reef are well-protected, while those on the outside lie along an outer bank on the edge of the Gulf Stream, where life abounds and anything goes.

For me, the real surprise was the variety of fish and the number of commonly occurring species that inhabited the reefs. Everyday we saw brilliantly colored Fairy Basslets, snappers, grunts, spadefish, Sergeant Majors, jacks, hogfish and angelfish. Finding an active cleaning station required little more than falling off the boat and opening my eyes. Turtles were as common as key lime pie, and the protected reefs were crawling with spiny lobsters and a variety of colorful crabs. The coral reefs were also alive with soft corals and rainbow-bright sponges.

The vast majority of the diving in Key Largo is on reefs that are less than 30 feet deep. Certainly there are some deeper wrecks and a few drop-offs, but most of the diving is both shallow and easy. The majority of the reefs are spur and groove formations, with enough relief to give marine creatures plenty of places to call home. I had also heard of the world-renowned dives on the wrecks of the *Duane* and the *Bibb*, which rest on the bottom outside of the sanctuary. A former Coast Guard cutter, the *Duane* served proudly in World War II as her crew rescued survivors of a British merchant ship, and teamed up with her sister ship, the *Spencer*, to sink a German U-boat. The wreck, an intact and impressive structure, lies in an area that is often in the eddies of the Gulf Stream. As a result, the current can run pretty hard, but the marine life and view are easily worth the effort. The *Duane* is swarming with barracudas, a big Jewfish or two, thick schools of jacks, snappers, an occasional shark, and we regularly spotted a substantial number of Wahoo while making our safety stops. It was a dive typical of Key Largo: A great mix of big-animal adrenaline and small creature fascination.

When our crew left Key Largo, I knew we had our "film in the can." And I'm already looking forward to the sequel, so long as it requires a return trip to the edge of the Gulf Stream.

Special thanks to Captain Spencer Slate.


Caribbean Spiny Lobster.

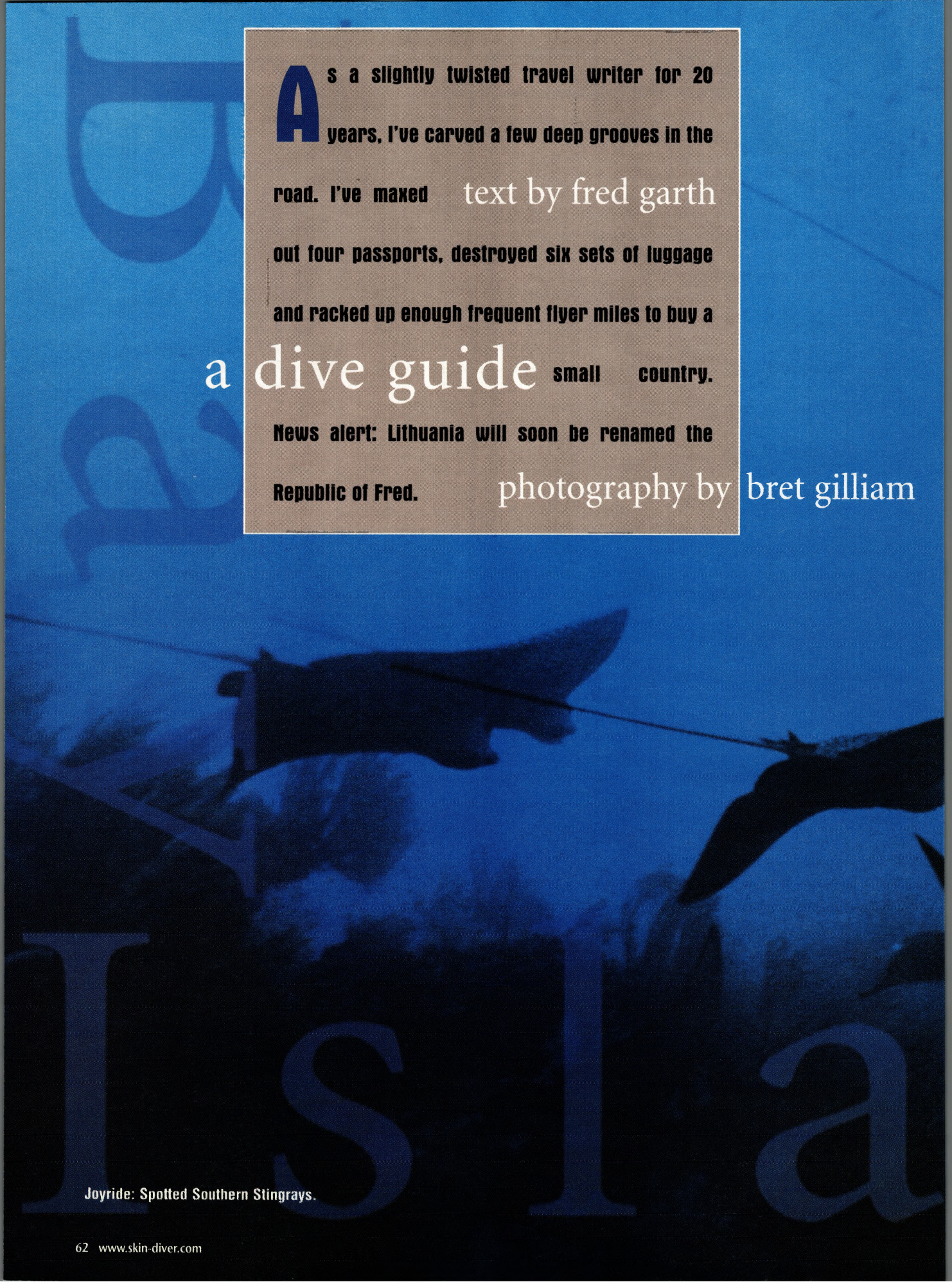

Scrawled Cowfish.

a dive guide

text by fred garth

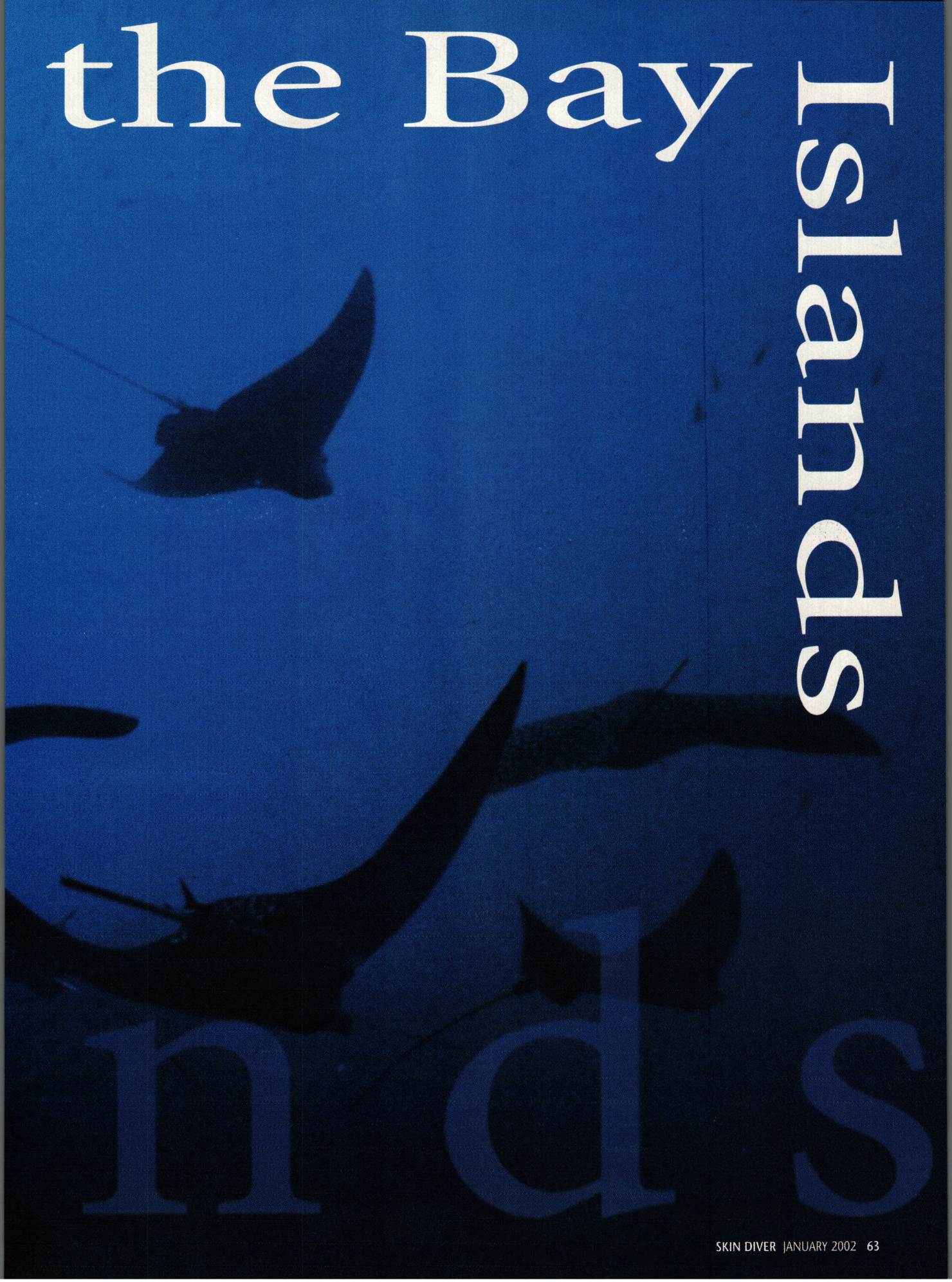
photography by bret gilliam

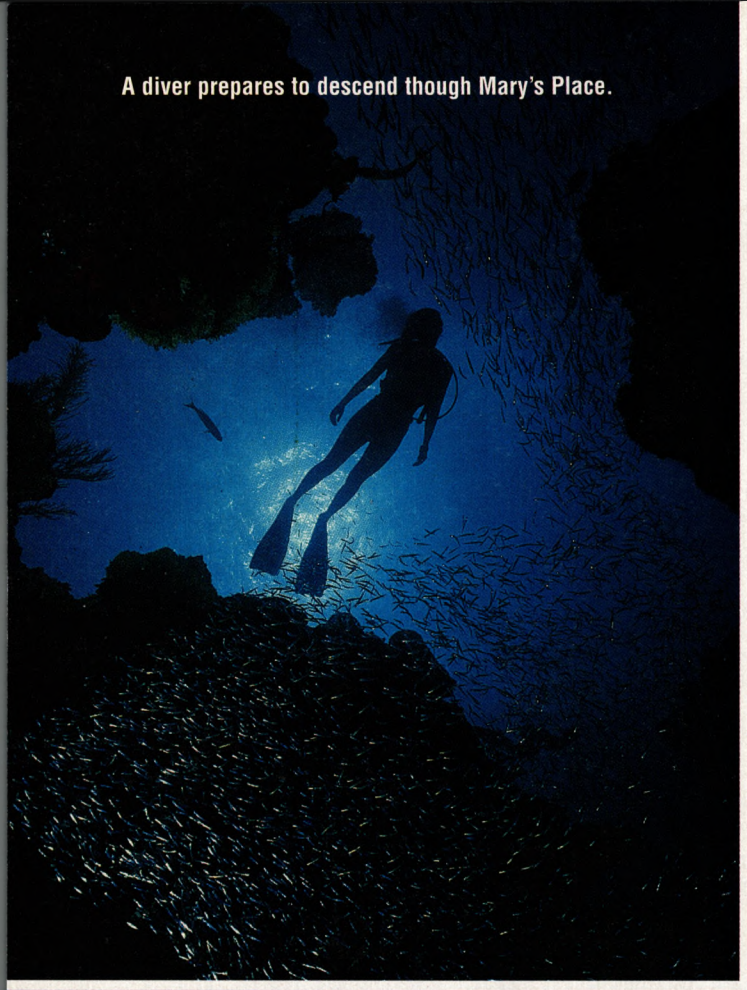
As a slightly twisted travel writer for 20 years, I've carved a few deep grooves in the road. I've maxed out four passports, destroyed six sets of luggage and racked up enough frequent flyer miles to buy a small country. News alert: Lithuania will soon be renamed the Republic of Fred.



Joyride: Spotted Southern Stingrays.

the Bay Islands





A diver prepares to descend though Mary's Place.



Feeling a bit like *Castaway* at West End.



Tube sponges mimic skyscrapers off Roatan.



A blur of jacks.

Even though I've made more than a hundred trips to the Caribbean, it remains one of my favorite destinations. Some of my best assignments have been to Honduras to dive the Bay Islands. And I'm not just saying that because they gave me a swanky beach house. This has nothing to do with it. Seriously, in addition to the spine-tingling diving, there are lots of reasons I love the Bay Islands. One, of course, is Salva Vida beer. Sure, I like the ice-cold, refreshing taste, but it's the thought behind the name that really gets my vote (Salva Vida translates to Life Saver). In the U.S., LifeSavers are sugar candies. In Honduras, it's the beer that saves your life. Ya gotta love an attitude like that.

Like me, others have apparently fallen in love with the Bay Island charm, because over the years, more divers keep coming. As a result, there are more resorts, a wider selection of restaurants and a troubling number of real estate agents with bad hair. Hey, you take the good with the bad. Even though the growth has been climbing steadily, the Bay Islands have retained their sex appeal. They're still the lush, mountainous, tropical islands that made them popular with mariners hundreds of years ago and with divers of today. And from my vantage point, the diving just keeps getting better. *How's that?* you ask. *Better? Really?* Well, my skeptical friend, I'll explain.

Reason one: Dive operators put down a new wreck every few years to add to the healthy collection. Reason two: The dolphin diving program at the Institute for Marine Research (at Anthony's Key Resort) has been wildly successful. People can snorkel with the dolphins on a waist-deep sandbar, or dive with them on a field of sand in 60 feet. Either way, it's a rush. Not only that, but the IMR has dolphin shows, educational classes, kids' camps and a plethora of other cool marine-related stuff. Reason three: Bay Islanders have a sound sense of environment, so the reefs are well-protected. Perhaps the best example of this is Mary's Place, a jagged crack in the reef on the south side of Roatan that was closed for almost five years because divers nearly finned it to death. Now, Mary is back and as pristine as ever. Reason four: A well-orchestrated shark dive is now available (also along the south shore of Roatan). Reason five: Utila (the westernmost island) has more Whale Sharks sightings than anywhere else in the Caribbean. Reason six: The viz still goes 100 feet or better most of the time. Reason seven: The dive boats have gotten bigger, faster and more comfortable. Certainly there are many more reasons, but if I explain everything you'll just stay home making a bigger dent in the couch and live vicariously through me.



Sponge and coral-infested reef forests are kept pristine and plentiful by the environmentally conscious Bay Islanders.

...I'm a sponge guy myself, and I get quite turned on by the many pink vase sponges, giant barrel sponges and...red rope sponges hanging off Roatan's walls.

The good news is that most of the resorts have upgraded since I first began visiting this area. Translation: They've tried to meet the needs of hopelessly spoiled modern travelers like you and me. That means air-conditioned rooms, telephones, the works. But if you still want the screen porch, ceiling fan experience, you can find it. Which leads us to Roatan's West End. With its postcard beach and sunset views, West End has developed rapidly. But, for the most part, West End is the Bay Island's low-budget destination. Hammocks can be rented for a few bucks a night. This has proven popular mostly to Euro-adventurers living on pocket change and saving money on less important items like food and laundry.

Unfortunately, one element that hasn't changed too much around the Bay Islands are the "no-see-'ems." They love to chew on tourists and the islands have lots of 'em (both bugs and tourists). So, bug spray always has been and continues to be as essential as sunscreen for your travel bag.

But the bugs don't seem to deter the backpackers who blissfully find their way from West End of Roatan to the island of Utila, another bargain zone. Many of the guidebooks list Utila as the least expensive island in the Caribbean to get certified. About a dozen dive stores on the island serve that impecunious crowd. But for the best diving, I recommend either the Utila Lodge or the Laguna Beach Resort, both of which

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On top of the the frequent Whale Shark sightings, Utila also has some very cool shallow seamounts and vibrant fringing reefs to the south, which make excellent second or third dives of the day. Morning dives are best reserved for Utila's sheer walls. A line of dramatic walls wraps around the southeast point of the island, parallel to the northern shoreline. This deep-water channel is also known as the Whale Shark Corridor. Utila's underwater variety is its strong suit, not to mention some colorful hole-in-the-wall bars and a few great beaches.

The New and the Old

The old French Harbor Yacht Club is back in business as the 4-star **Roatan Dive & Yacht Club**.

As part of the refurbishment, the restaurant was redone and is run by an international chef who knows how to please every palate. There is also an Internet Café, and the French Harbor ocean view rooms have new furnishings. The on-site dive operation visits some of the Caribbean's best dive sites; Mary's Place and Enchanted Forest are just minutes away.

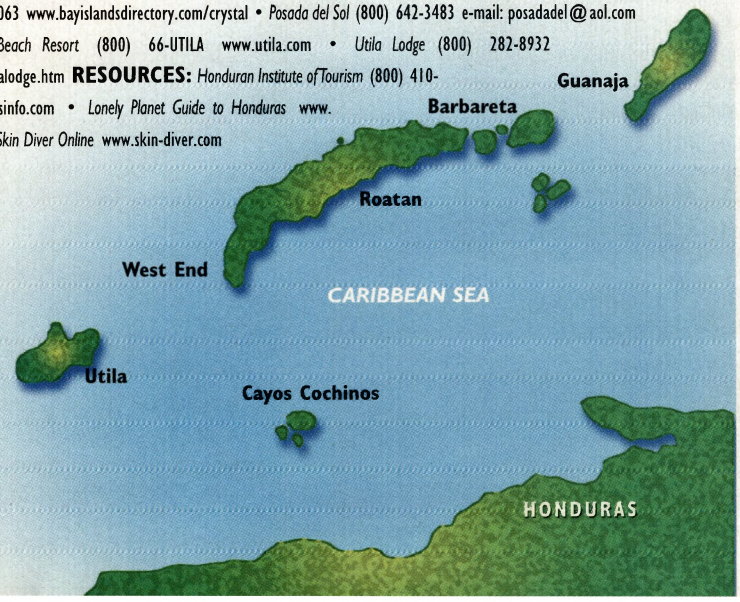
And the **Bay Islands Beach Resort** now features an authentic **Wild Cane Historic Village**, which provides a snapshot of Roatan's village life over the last 150 years. The village offers traditional cooking, an international bazaar and bush doctor remedies. The church even has mock weddings, which bring the fascinating history of the islands alive.

For more information, see the *Skin Diver* Guide below.



Skin Diver GUIDE • The Bay Islands

GETTING THERE: Continental is now scheduling service, and TACA is also expanding their routes, with direct flights from the major hubs of Los Angeles, San Francisco, New Orleans, Houston and Miami. You can also travel to Roatan via San Pedro Sula with American Airlines, then onward to Roatan with Islena Airlines. **FACTS & TIPS: Best Time To Visit:** Year-round; hot in summer, a tiny bit cooler in winter. There's a remote chance of hurricanes in August through September. **Topside Climate:** Tropical, hot and moist. **Water Temperature:** Summer, low to mid 80s°F; winter, ranging high 70s to low 80s°F. **Exchange Rate:** 1.00 (USD) = 15 Limperas. U.S. dollar is easily accepted. **Time Difference:** EST minus 1 hour. **Live-aboards:** Bay Islands Aggressor III (800) 348-2628 www.aggressor.com **RESORTS & DIVE OPERATORS: Roatan:** *Anthony's Key Resort* (800) 443-0717 www.anthonyskey.com • *Bay Islands Beach Resort* (800) 4-ROATAN www.bibr.com • *Coco View Resort* (800) 282-8932 www.roatan.com/cocoview.html • *Dive Roatan* (at Paya Bay Resort) (888) 662-2466 www.payabay.com • *Fantasy Island Beach Resort* (800) 676-2826 www.fantasyislandresort.com • *Inn of Last Resort* (888) 238-8266 www.innoflastresort.com • *Reef House* (800) 328-8897 www.reefhouseresort.com • *Roatan's Dive and Yacht Club* (011) 504-455-5233 www.roatanyachtclub.com **West End:** (Budget Accommodations) *Sueño Del Mar/Sea Breeze Hotel* (800) 298-9009 www.suenodelmar.com **Guanaja:** *Bayman Bay Club* (800) 524-1823 www.baymanbayclub.com • *Guanaja Reef Club* (for property) (757) 787-3811 www.guanajareefclub.com • *Nautilus Dive* (at Crystal Beach Resort) (800) 535-7063 www.bayislandsdirectory.com/crystal • *Posada del Sol* (800) 642-3483 e-mail: posadadel@aol.com **Utila:** *Laguna Beach Resort* (800) 66-UTILA www.utila.com • *Utila Lodge* (800) 282-8932 www.roatan.com/utilalodge.htm **RESOURCES:** *Honduran Institute of Tourism* (800) 410-9608 www.hondurasinfo.com • *Lonely Planet Guide to Honduras* www.lonelyplanet.com • *Skin Diver Online* www.skin-diver.com





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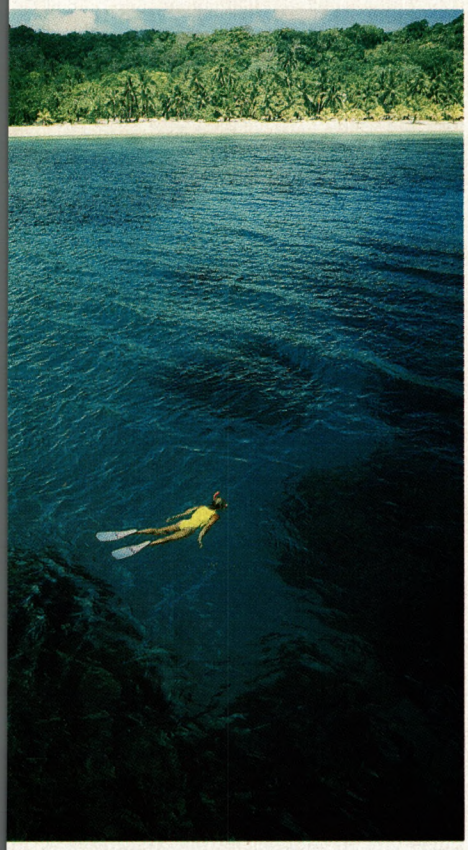


The island of Guanaja doesn't have the flow of tourists to support independent dive shops like Utila, but there are a couple of prime resorts—the Bayman Bay Club and Posada del Sol. Bayman Bay on the north shore has been called a tree-house resort, because its natural wood bungalows climb a hill into the jungle. Just offshore of the Club, you'll find some of the island's best snorkeling and shore diving. You can get lost in the macro stuff, like seahorses, tube worms, bluebell tunicates, and white and black crinoids on just about any coral head you stumble across.

Posada is more like an upscale Spanish hacienda, complete with tile floors, freshwater pool, hanging gardens and Carmen Miranda in her fruit basket hat. Easily accessed from Posada is one of the island chain's best wrecks, the *Jado Trader*. A five-minute boat ride offshore from Guanaja is a true barrier reef with a string of dreamy sandy islets dotted along the way. The diving on both the inside and

Guanaja is a true barrier reef.... You'll find everything from protected snorkeling to excellent deep walls, and a few beaches to make some fresh footprints.

outside of the barrier reef is excellent from the surface down to the depths. You'll find everything from protected snorkeling to excellent deep walls and a few beaches to make some fresh footprints. For



Don't bother me. I'm lost in my own blue fantasyland.

one of Guanaja's prime land-based thrills, you can climb to the archipelago's highest peak, where you can drink the elixir of life from the Bay Island's only year-round waterfall.

On the Big Daddy island, Roatan, the resort scene is abundant. Choose from establishments such as Anthony's Key, Coco View, Fantasy Island and Reef House. Other key resorts are the Bay Islands' Beach Resort, Inn of the Last Resort and Roatan Dive & Yacht Club. And there are scads more little guys from West End to the easternmost community of Oak Ridge.

East of Roatan is the virtually untrammeled island of Barbareta. It's privately owned, with a rustic resort and some of the best diving in the islands at places like the Elbow and Pigeon Cayes. Don't look for any condos on Barbareta anytime soon, but you can dive it with one of several operators who run day trips there from Roatan.

However, you don't have to go all the way to Barbareta to find outstanding diving. Sandwiched to the north and south by an extensive wall system, Roatan literally has hundreds of wall

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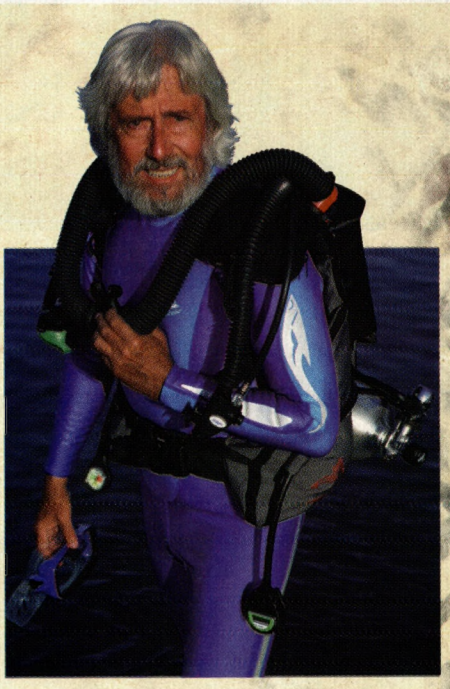
Roatan, Honduras Bay Islands

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dives, patch reefs and fringing reefs. Spots like Mary's Place, Calvin's Crack and Spooky Channel are favorites, but it seems like you can drop in anywhere and find good diving. Roatan's walls are replete with a deep variety of corals and sponges. In fact, at least 62 of the 64 known stony corals are there. Of course, I like corals, but I'm a sponge guy myself and I get quite the turned on by the many pink vase sponges, giant barrel sponges and, my all-time favorite, red rope sponges hanging off Roatan's walls.

Finally, for the most nautical view of the Bay Islands, the *Aggressor IV* live-aboard dive boat is it. They hit all the hot spots the resorts dive, as well as some off-shore pinnacles day boats can't get to. The 100-foot-plus live-aboard has been diving the Bay Islands for more than 10 years, and is great for both new divers and the more advanced diver looking to push the edge a bit. For five or six dives each day, the *Aggressor IV* fits the bill.


Fields of healthy coral are a landmark to Bay Islands diving.

Even with its blossoming popularity, the Bay Islands are still a shining opal in the Western Caribbean. As long as they keep enhancing the resorts, protecting the diving resources and providing a stock of cold Salva Vida, I'll always look forward to another Honduran stamp in my passport.

Special thanks to Anthony's Key Resort, Inn of the Last Resort, Roatan Dive & Yacht Club, Coco View, Fantasy Island, Bay Islands Beach Resort, Laguna Beach Resort, Utila Lodge, Casa Romeo's and Rick's American Café.



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DIVER'S LIBRARY

BY KYLE FOSTER

Welcome to the Diver's Library, where each month we bring you the latest in diving media.

FROM AQUA QUEST PUBlications, well-known in the diving community for their thorough and detailed guides to regions all over the world, comes *Diving Micronesia* by Eric Hanauer, a comprehensive guide to all the islands in Micronesia. The first chapter, "An Overview," is filled with useful information such as currency, dress etiquette, immigration and customs and a section that helps first-time travelers to the region decide where to go by asking, "What Are You Looking For?" Whether you're seeking nightlife, liveaboards or to get away from it all, this section directs you to a Micronesia destination that will fit your traveling preferences.

The diving is laid out with a catalog of water temperature and visibility (one of the few books to even mention this), underwater habitats and marine life. The region's diving is then narrowed down into specific destinations, arranged from west to east, starting with Guam and continuing on through to the Marshall Islands. Each destination is described "At a Glance," then broken down into dive sites, which include information on depth and skill level and a brief description of the diving. Each dive destination is also accompanied by a list of things to do on land, illustrative photos and a map locating each dive site listed.

Diving Micronesia
by Eric Hanauer,
Aqua Quest
Publications, $18.95,
(800) 933-8989,
www.aquaquest.com

Reading this book as someone who has visited the region, I can say that the list of marine creatures that one might see is accurate and reliable, and the tips given about navigating the sites are helpful to know for a first-time visitor. I particularly enjoyed the section about the author's experience of chewing betel nut, because it was an interesting account of one of the unique opportunities that Micronesia has to offer.



Overall, *Diving Micronesia* is a comprehensive and useful guide for new visitors to the islands of Micronesia and the Marshall Islands. The appendix even lists 52 dive operators in the area and contact information for each. *Diving Micronesia* is one book you'll need for planning a trip to these exotic Pacific islands.

For information on how to submit a product for review in Diver's Library, contact Kyle Foster at fosterk@primediacmmg.com.

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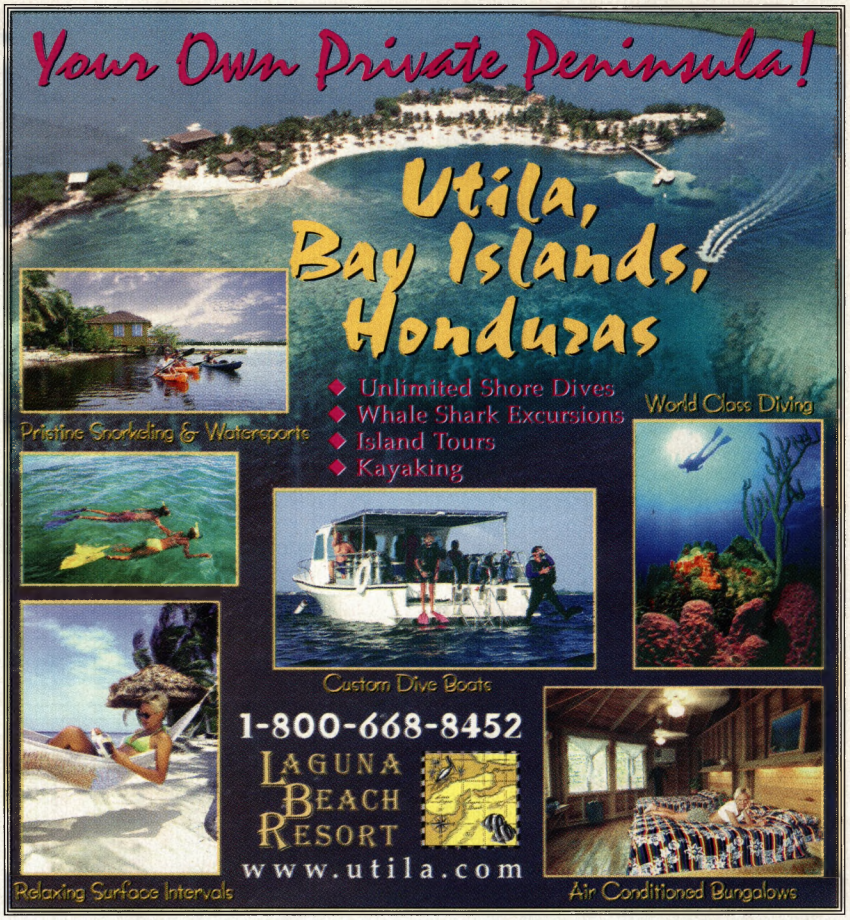
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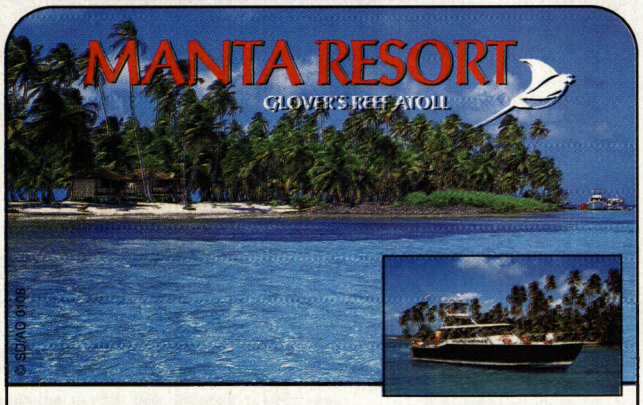
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FOR THE DESTINATION COLLECTOR who has been ticking locations off his list, it's time to add a new one: Vietnam. With recreational diving pioneered only in 1995, you are guaranteed maiden adventures, both underwater and topside. The diving off the coast of Nha Trang, southeast of Ho Chi Minh City (formerly Saigon), is arguably the best in the South China Sea and is worth a visit.

Vietnam's tourism infrastructure is still being developed. It is a Communist country and things run a bit differently. They still have a way to go to fully embrace tourism in a way that western travelers will find familiar, but that is precisely what makes the destination so appealing. The people are gracious and eager to meet new travelers from other places.

Nha Trang's 7-mile stretch of sandy beach is popular for both



Soft coral close-up at Hon Mun.

Crinoids, soft corals, sponges, nudibranchs and all the other colorful invertebrates you expect in this part of the world are flourishing there.

Vietnamese and foreign visitors. The bay offers a knockout view of the offshore islands and has, in my opinion, one of the best climates in Vietnam. Off Nha Trang, the water tempera-

PHOTOS: SARA SHOEMAKER


Harbor boats at Nha Trang.

ture is bath-warm, with a plentiful reef and good visibility. Best of all, most sites are within a one-hour boat ride of Nha Trang.

Among others, there are two dive sites most frequently visited: Hon Mun and Caves. Hon Mun is an island many people visit for picnics and day trips. It has both a sandy bottom and rocky substrate with coral heads in shallow water. There is some magnificent macro life. An abundance of small colorful creatures thrive in the coral heads. Some of the tiniest anemones and clownfish I have ever seen were tucked into the reef. Crinoids, soft corals, sponges, nudibranchs and all the other colorful invertebrates you expect in this part of the world flourish there.



Caves is a much more dramatic site, with its massive boulder slab formations scattered underwater and extending up into an island. The underwater rock formations can tempt and tease any wreck diver into forgetting that there are no diveable wrecks.

New dive operations are springing up in emerging tourism areas and a handful of more established ones. All operate from the coast of Nha Trang, and you'll find a variety of places to hunker down between dives along the southeastern coast. Whether its hostel-style, mid-range or full-on luxury you're looking for, you'll find it.

One of my favorite haunts is the Ana Mandara Resort in Nha Trang. It's a jewel by any international standard and offers the finest in accommodations, with incredible food and tons to do. I dived with their dive operation and the staff was patient and good humored in explaining the cultural and governmental norms. The island is a like a physical *Cliff Notes* to Vietnam's culture, beauty and diving.

—Sara Shoemaker

Travel tips: Regular flights go to Nha Trang from Saigon (Ho Chih Minh City), Hanoi and Da Nang on Air Vietnam. Night diving is now possible, and the best diving conditions are mid January to early October. The rainy season makes diving less predictable in November, December and early January.

For more on Vietnam, visit www.divevietnam.com.



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Shootin

The Kona Classic Underwater Photography & Art Festival: April 27 to May 5, 2002

by Guy Miller

EVER SINCE THE FIRST WESTerners arrived in Kealakekua Bay in the late 1700s, the Kona Coast on the Big Island of Hawaii has lured vast numbers of travelers in search of adventure and culture. Although the manner in which visitors come to Kona has changed greatly since the late 1700s, the rich cultural experience is still alive. The artist population and cultural treasure of Kona coupled with the reassuring blue water of the Pacific Ocean make Kona an idyllic dive and travel experience.

On April 27 to May 5, 2002, visitors from around the world will descend on the Kona area for yet another discovery—the first annual Kona Classic Underwater Photography and Art Festival. This festival, presented by the Hawaii Visitors Bureau and *Skin Diver* magazine in partnership with the local businesses and dive operators, promises to deliver a special Kona experience that the early travelers only dreamed about. During this one-week event, underwater photography enthusiasts, families, divers and art lovers will migrate to Kona to indulge in the rich atmosphere.

The Kona Classic Underwater Photography and Art Festival will feature daily diving opportunities with world-famous underwater pho-

PHOTO: DAVID FLEETHAM

g with the Stars



Wish you were here? Encounters like this one with a Loggerhead Turtle are everyday experiences for Kona divers.

tographers, such as **Norbert Wu, Bob Talbot, Doug Perrine, Marty Snyderman, David Fleetham** and **James Watt**. Each day, divers will have the opportunity to dive side by side with the best photographers in the world, and watch, learn and absorb their techniques and skills, as they shoot the images that fill the pages of *Skin Diver* magazine. Better yet, at the end of each day, photographers will take time to sit with other shooters to critique their images and help them achieve their best shots ever. Imagine private photo instruction from the best in the world! Who knows, your image could be the one that wins first place in the photo contest. You might walk home with a Wyland-sculpted Kona Classic Trophy for best overall image and get your photo in *Skin Diver*!

On the opening day of the event, there will be a 5K biathlon (run/swim) on the very streets where the famous Ironman Triathlons are held each year. During the week, attendees will join **David Doubilet** for an intimate evening film festival on the cliffs of the Kona Coast at the Royal Kona Resort. And, people will have the

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Shooting with the Stars

opportunity to meet **Wyland**, the world's best known marine life artist (who also has a studio and gallery in downtown Kona). Additionally, Bob Talbot and Norbert Wu will give special evening presentations of their most recent work.

One of the most exciting aspects of Hawaii's diving menu is the opportunity to encounter the pelagics that frequent the area. Hawaii and the Kona Coast border the abyssal drop-off and are in the path of Humpback Whales, rays, tuna and the largest of all fish, Whale Sharks.

The Kona Coast is also ideal for families, and kids will have great opportunities to snorkel and participate in an underwater treasure hunt sponsored by Body Glove. Art festivals featuring local craftsman and artists will open and close the week's festivities. Side trips to the volcanoes in a helicopter or exploring the beautiful city of Hilo are excellent options for the afternoons.

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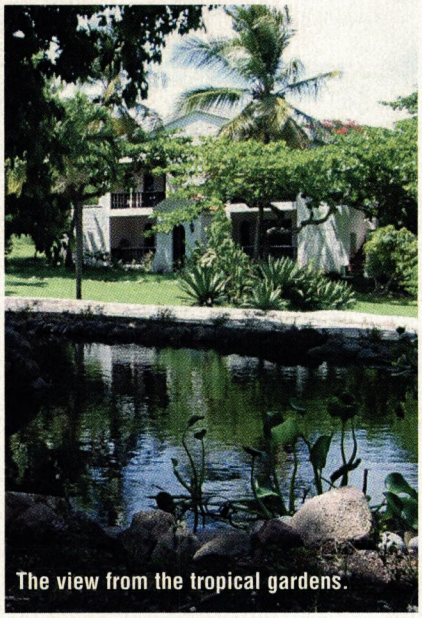
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PHOTO: DAVID FLEETHAM

REASONS TO RENDEZVOUS

FEATURING SOME OF THE CARIBbean's most dramatic and unspoiled underwater scenery, Grenada now boasts its first dedicated dive resort, Rendezvous Beach Resort. In Prickly Bay, just 10 to 15 minutes from the downtown hub of St. George's, Rendezvous Beach Resort is just minutes away from some of the most spectacular dives in Grenada, such as the famous *Bianca C* and Shark Reef.

Rendezvous' on-site dive operation, Aquanauts, has professionally certified divers and owners, top of the line Scubapro rental equipment, and ensures that students of all levels enjoy safe and exciting diving. Divers travel conveniently and comfortably to their destinations on Aquanauts' 30-foot dive boat, *Spice Lady,* or on the 42-foot dive boat, *Calypso*.


The view from the tropical gardens.

Retaining its old world charm, the resort offers modern amenities, such as A/C, direct dial phones, satellite TV, business center and a first-class dive center. Facing to the west with terrific sunsets, the resort's 22 rooms are set amongst tropical gardens. Also on site are the South Point Bar & Grill (international cuisine), an oceanfront pool and relaxing beach bar.


Enjoy lunch on the patio.

For more information, contact Caradonna Caribbean Tours at (800) 736-7021, or via e-mail at sales@caradonna.com. For more information on the Rendezvous Beach Resort and Aquanauts, visit the resort's website at www.rendezvousresort.com or e-mail info@rendezvousresort.com.



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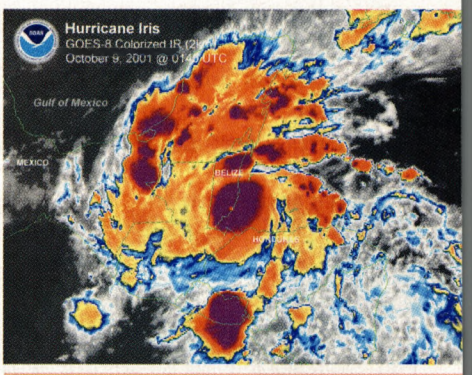
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FREEFLOW

Iris Hits Belize,

SUSTAINING WINDS OF 140 MPH, Hurricane Iris hit the coast of Belize on October 8, causing great damage to homes and property, and capsizing the live-aboard M/V *Wave Dancer*. As of Wednesday, October 10, the National Emergency Management Organization reported thousands of people homeless and 22 people dead, with eight listed as missing. According to Peter Hughes Diving, 20 lives were lost when the 120-foot-long *Wave Dancer* capsized.

"On the *Wave Dancer*, the crew was a family and every guest who walked onto the deck a member," remembered Annie Crawley, former *Wave Dancer* crewmember of 16 months. "Brenda Wade, the stewardess, went the extra mile to leave chocolate kisses on every guest's pillow at night. And who could forget Chef Elouisa Johnson, who worked on the *Wave Dancer* for more than six years—keeping everyone's belly full and happy. Elouisa was a surrogate mother, and she would have taken Aaron Stark, [the] new head dive instructor, right under her wing. He had just arrived in Belize two weeks before the accident."



Peter Hughes Diving reported that the *Wave Dancer* was too far south to escape the storm when Iris changed course. The crew decided to moor in the bay of Big Creek, approximately 80 miles south of Belize City. It is an area well-known to boaters for its protection from storms.

With this area of Belize evacuated, there was no place to off-load passengers, and it was decided to wait out the hurricane on board.

Post-hurricane investigations have suggested that a bollard used to secure

PHOTOS: COURTESY NATIONAL CLIMATIC DATA CENTER. OPPOSITE: COURTESY PETER HUGHES DIVING.

the vessel's stern broke loose from the pier. The *Wave Dancer* was lifted by the wind and surge, ripping the remaining stern lines and allowing the boat to be carried into the creek, where she capsized in the middle of the river.

"It's an absolute miracle that any person survived the fury of Hurricane Iris," said Peter Hughes. "I know our crew did all they could to protect each and every individual."

As of October 10, all 20 bodies had been recovered and eight survivors had been accounted for. Of the 20 who perished, 17 were members of the Richmond Dive Club (Richmond, VA). The remaining three were crewmembers.

"Our heartfelt condolences go out to the families and friends of the victims of this tragedy," commented Hughes. "All of us at Peter Hughes Diving are in a state of grieving, disbelief and shock." —THC

Peter Hughes Diving and Divers Alert Network (DAN) have jointly organized a fund to collect donations to benefit the families of the deceased. To make a donation, visit www.diversalertnetwork.org. Alternatively, checks should be made payable to Wave Dancer *Disaster Memorial Fund, and mailed to The Peter B. Bennett Center 6 West Colony Place Durham, NC 27705. For further information, contact Patricia Rose (PHD) at (305) 669-9391 or Michelle Harrison (DAN) at (919) 684-2948. For information regarding the Richmond Dive Club, visit www.richmonddiveclub.com.*

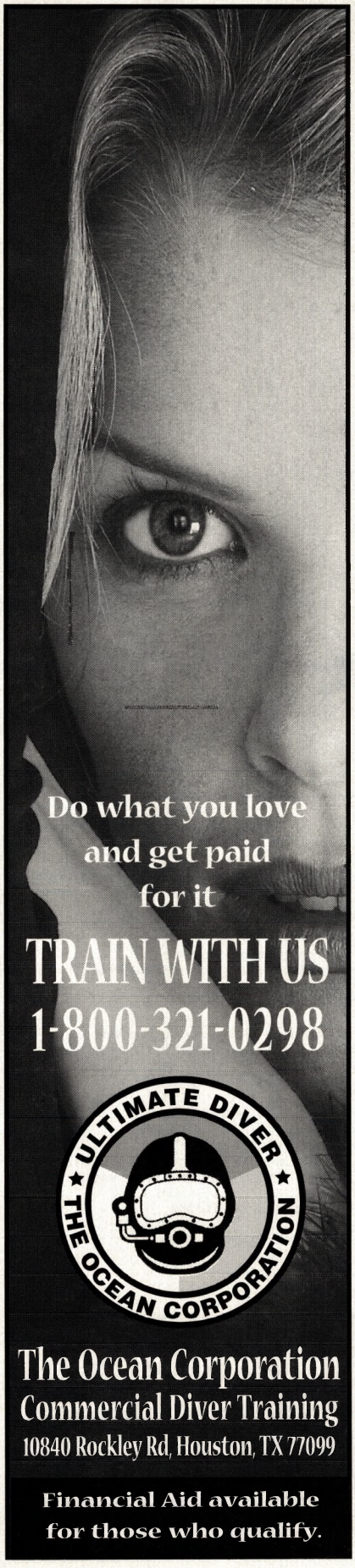
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Jim Church Celebrates Birthday

Long-time contributor and friend of *Skin Diver* magazine, Jim Church will celebrate his 70th birthday aboard Aggressor live-aboards. Jim is a world-renowned photographer who has shared his skill and knowledge with Aggressor guests since 1989. He will be making two back-to-back trips, one on January 6 to 13, aboard the *Truk Aggressor II*, and another January 13 to 15, aboard the *Palau Aggressor II*.



For more information, call (800) 348-2628, e-mail info@aggressor.com or visit www.aggressor.com.

Beneath the Sea

This year Beneath the Sea will be held in Secaucus, NJ, the weekend of March 22 to 24. There will be 300 exhibitors from all corners of the world, over 60 seminars, workshops and much more. Stan Waterman, Ralph White and Jack and Sue Drafahl will give presentations. The Women Divers Hall of Fame will also host some events. *For more information, call (914) 664-4310, e-mail info@beneaththesea.org or visit www.beneaththesea.org.*

Great Lakes Shipwreck Festival

Sponsored by the Ford Seahorses Scuba Diving Club, this year's festival will take place in Dearborn, MI, on February 16. The keynote speaker will be Bernie Chowdhury, author of *The Last Dive*. Newly discovered Lake Huron will be presented, as well as travelogues of diving in New England, Malaysia and Indonesia. The Annual U/W Photo Contest results will also be announced.

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Cod Hole, near Lizard Island, is a site famed for the huge potato cod that congregate and interact with divers. Between here and Cairns, to the south, are a chain of pristine coral reefs named the Ribbons, which present a wealth of marine life from Mantis Shrimp to Minke Whales, excellent for fish and macro photography. Mike Ball Dive Expeditions' *Supersport* is the best-appointed live-aboard operating to the Cod Hole, offering 3 day/3 night trips and 11 dives. The expedition includes a spectacular low level reef flight to decrease your traveling time and increase your diving time with prices from $584.

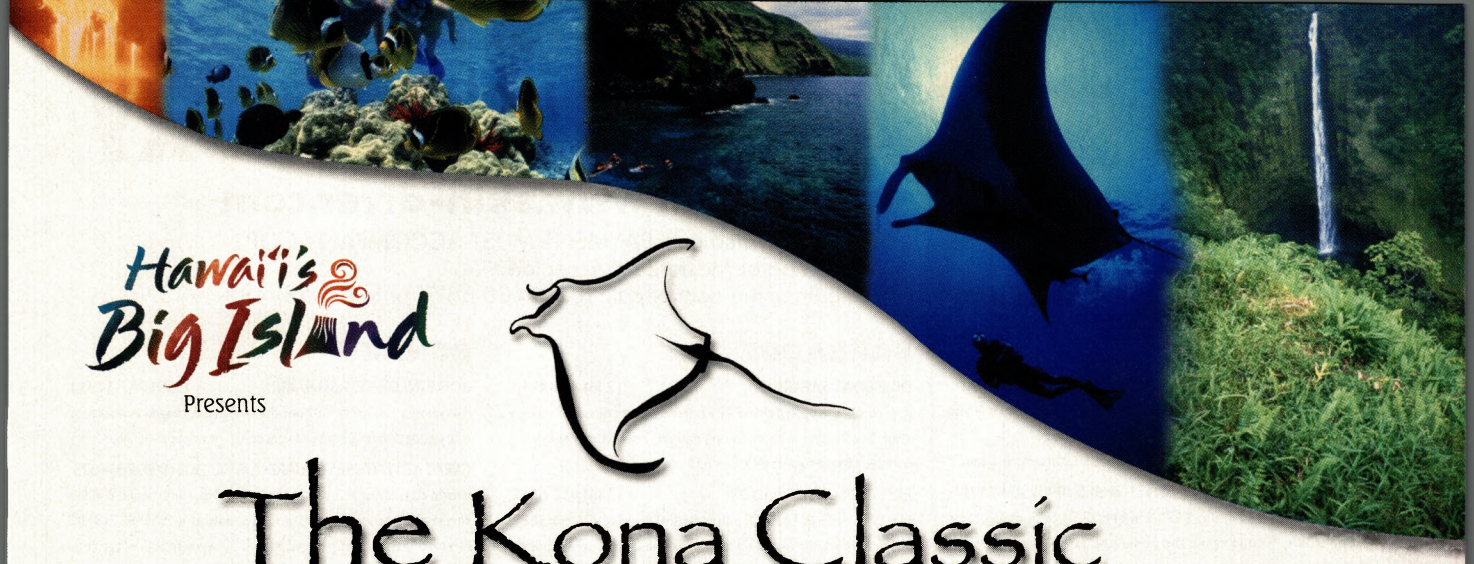
The remote oceanic reefs of the Coral Sea, 100 miles beyond the Great Barrier Reef, are where the adventure is at. Much of it is untouched and Flinders Reef has some of the best wall diving in Australia with visibility in excess of 130 feet! A definite "must see" is the action-packed shark feed at Scuba Zoo, offering a chance to observe up to 30 sharks within arms reach. You can combine the Coral Sea and the Great Barrier Reef with the legendary wreck of SS *Yongala*, where you can see Australia's densest population of large marine life on *Spoilsport*. *Spoilsport* is Australia's most comfortable and prestigious live-aboard, and offers six or seven days of unlimited diving starting from $1,542.

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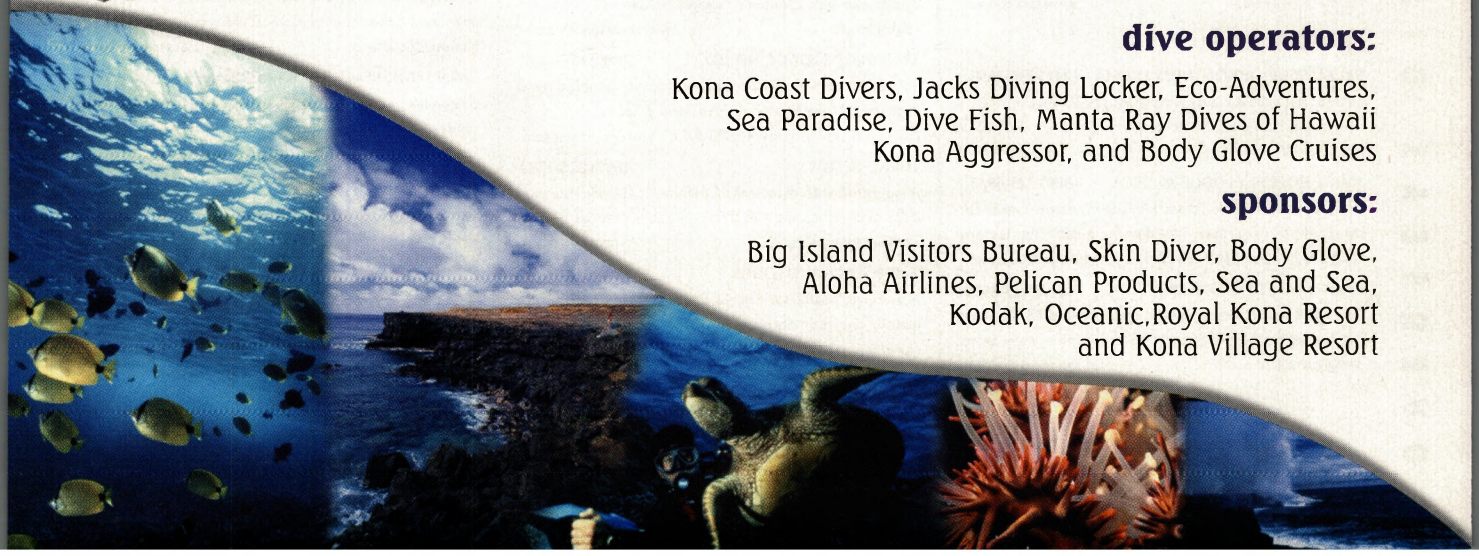
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Leader or Loser?

BY KARL SHREEVES

WANT TO START AN ARGUMENT? ASK TWO TEK DIVERS whether to wear deco cylinders on one side or both sides. Or, ask what gas to use at 145 feet in open water. Often, it's like wearing two watches. With one, you know the time. With two, you're never sure.

Beginning tek divers often don't know who gives credible advice. In tek diving, there's consensus about broad issues, but disagreement on many particulars. So who do you listen to? How do you know whose advice to scrutinize and whose to trust?

Scrutinize

I consider these as red flags to take what I'm hearing or reading with a grain of salt:

Anything goes. Tek divers have learned a lot about what to do and what not to do through accidents and close calls. A lot of things that appeared to make sense didn't work. Other things may work more than one way, but the community uses a standard approach to benefit from that standard. A good example is breathing the long hose second stage. So, when someone says "it's personal preference" about things that are community standards, I'm cautious about what that person suggests.

My way or the highway. The opposite is also a red flag. A narrow-minded approach makes it difficult to adapt to differing needs, technologies and environments. Drawing a line without a legitimate justification or stating a personal preference as the only way to do something is a tip-off to close-mindedness.

It works here, so it works everywhere. There are some divers who have made lots of tek dives, but all in the same environment. Such divers are usually good information sources for that environment, but if they insist that their practices apply everywhere, watch out. There is no single diving methodology that applies to all environments.

Attacks the person, not the position. Tek divers will never agree on everything, but that's probably good. As General George Patton said, "If everyone thinks the same thing, no one's thinking." How someone disagrees can tell you a lot. An informed tekker disputes based on knowledge, citing flaws with the proposed method or benefits of an alternate method. An uninformed person responds with the strategy of the weak position and attacks the person.

Cultism. A huge red flag is a cult-type following that justifies a recommendation based on it being "right" because it's the way "we" do it. You won't confuse this with team diving, which benefits from standardizing practices based on logic and objective considerations.

Trust

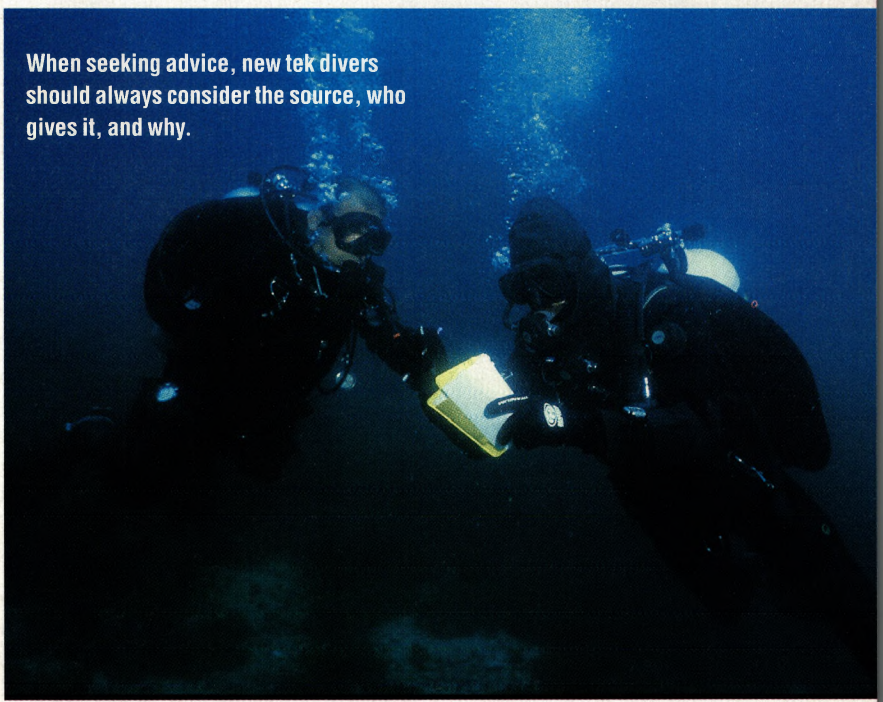
On the other side, I take these as signs of credibility:

Balanced. Truly knowledgeable tek divers seldom take an extreme position. They tend to be middle of the road because the truth is: reality is gray, not black or white.

Disciplined, yet flexible and open. Tekkers worth listening to follow established procedures based on reason, experience and real-world data. They can tell you why they do what they do, but they're not threatened by something just because it's new or different.

Debate positions, rather than people. Tek divers you can learn from aren't threatened by people who disagree. They know their stuff and can discuss issues without attacking people proposing a differing view. They usually see both sides of an issue and choose based on specific facts and benefits. When they learn something new and better, they're not afraid to change their points of view or admit when they're wrong or don't know.

Humble. In all walks, the people who know the most seem to be those who know how much they don't know. They're happy to share what they know, but they're also happy to listen because they realize they can learn from anyone.



When seeking advice, new tek divers should always consider the source, who gives it, and why.

Are these characteristics absolutes? Of course not. Extremist jerks can be right and reasonable, humble tekkers can be wrong. But if you're a beginner, at least you know the trends.

Karl Shreeves is VP Technical Development for DSAT and PADI.

PHOTO: MICHELLE VAN VLIET

MILESTONES

BY SCOTT D. JONES

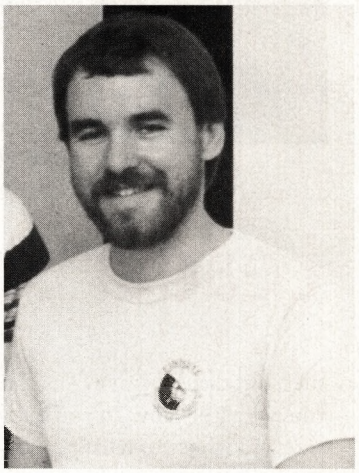
A look at those who helped define diving, and continue to push it forward.

Martin Sutton: His Eye on the Sea

MARTIN SUTTON HAS HAD A 30-YEAR-LONG LOVE affair with diving that has taken him from Australia to the Red Sea and finally to Grand Cayman, where he founded Fisheye, the popular photo and video operation.

Sutton caught the diving "bug" back in the 1970s, while traveling to Australia. After becoming a certified instructor, he began to learn about underwater photography. In 1980, he moved to Grand Cayman and, after a few years of working for well-known operators on the island, opened Fisheye.

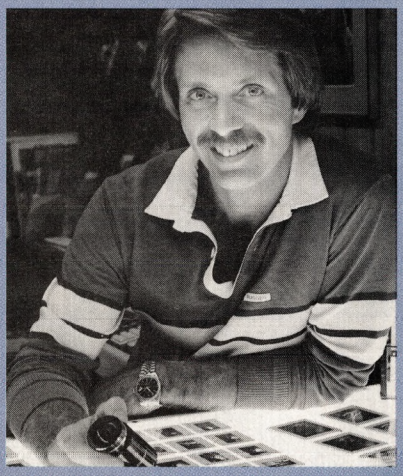
With an emphasis on underwater photography and quality diving experiences, Sutton helped make Fisheye a key resource for underwater film projects that came to the island. He played a role in video and film products for PADI, *National Geographic*, The Cousteau Society and numerous television networks. In the mid-1990s, Sutton was awarded the prestigious TELLY Award for video excellence.



While he's not on dive boats as much these days, Sutton stays involved in the business of promoting underwater imagery. Like others in the business, he's seen the growth of digital imagery and looks forward to new technological advances in coming years.

Stephen Frink: Exposing Neptune's and Victoria's Secrets

FOR MORE THAN 20 YEARS, STEPHEN Frink has been doing his part to bring images of the incredible underwater world to divers and nondivers alike. A significant contributor to *Skin Diver* magazine for many years, Frink helped to set new standards of excellence in underwater photography.



Working through his Key Largo based company, Waterhouse, Frink's work has been featured in such diverse publications as *Time*, *Newsweek*, *Esquire*, *National Geographic* and *Money* magazines, and in numerous promotions, articles and catalogs. None were more visible (and more popular) than his work with last year's Victoria's Secret catalog, which made him the envy of men everywhere. "Shoots like that one don't come around every day, so I was thankful to have been selected for that project," Frink recalled with a smile. "It was a *tough* duty, for sure."

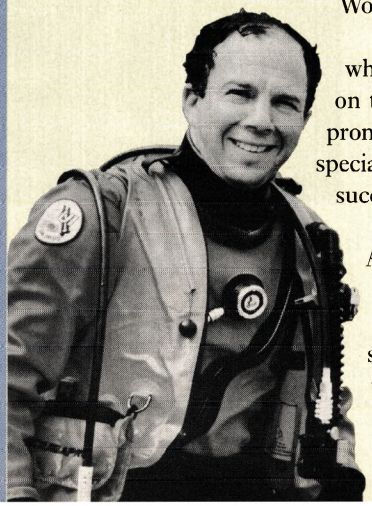
Today, with the growth of technology in underwater photography, Frink is heavily involved in the teaching and promotion of digital imaging, which he predicts will become the industry standard for underwater photography in the near future.

Marty Snyderman: Always Searching for Mr. Big

IF THERE'S A PHOTO OR VIDEO PROJECT THAT INVOLVES SHARKS, THERE'S A BETTER than average chance that Marty Snyderman was involved in some capacity. This dive industry veteran, who has been shooting award-winning underwater imagery for more than two decades, is a highly sought-after source for issues and images involving marine wildlife, the marine environment and related issues.

Currently the Field Editor for *Skin Diver* magazine and author of the Ask the Pro column, Snyderman took his love for diving and underwater images and turned it into a profession that has landed his photos on the cover of *National Geographic* magazine, *Audubon* and all the major dive publications.

Not satisfied with still images, Snyderman also built his skills as a cinematographer, working on numerous shark-related programs including "The Secret World of Sharks and Rays," which aired on PBS; "To Be With Sharks (View from the Cage)," which was the highest rated program to premiere on the Discovery Channel's annual "Shark Week" promotion; and the National Geographic Society special, "Sharks," another highly-rated broadcasting success.



For his efforts, Snyderman received an Emmy Award and continues to teach and educate people about sharks, marine life and underwater photography. He recently started an online photography school and has successfully turned students on to the art and mastery of underwater imagery, whether it's still images, video or film.

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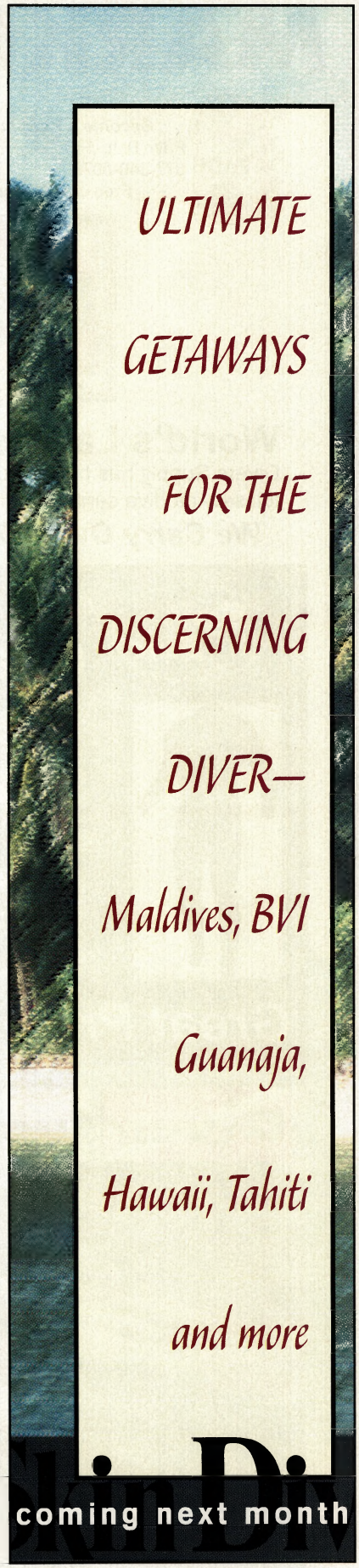
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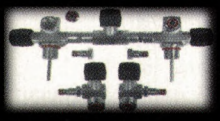
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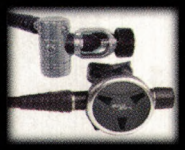
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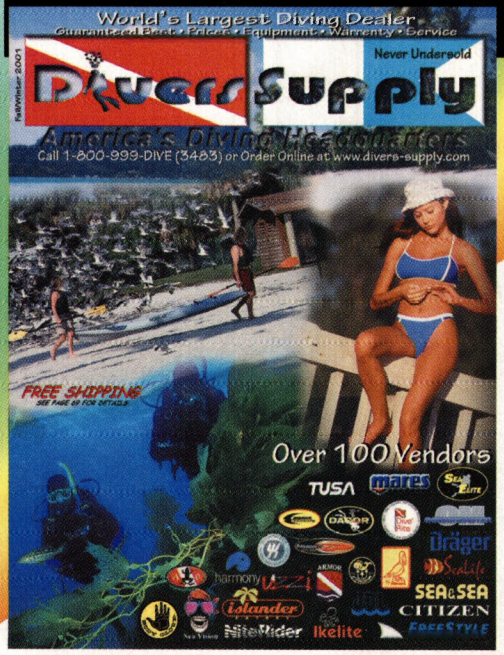








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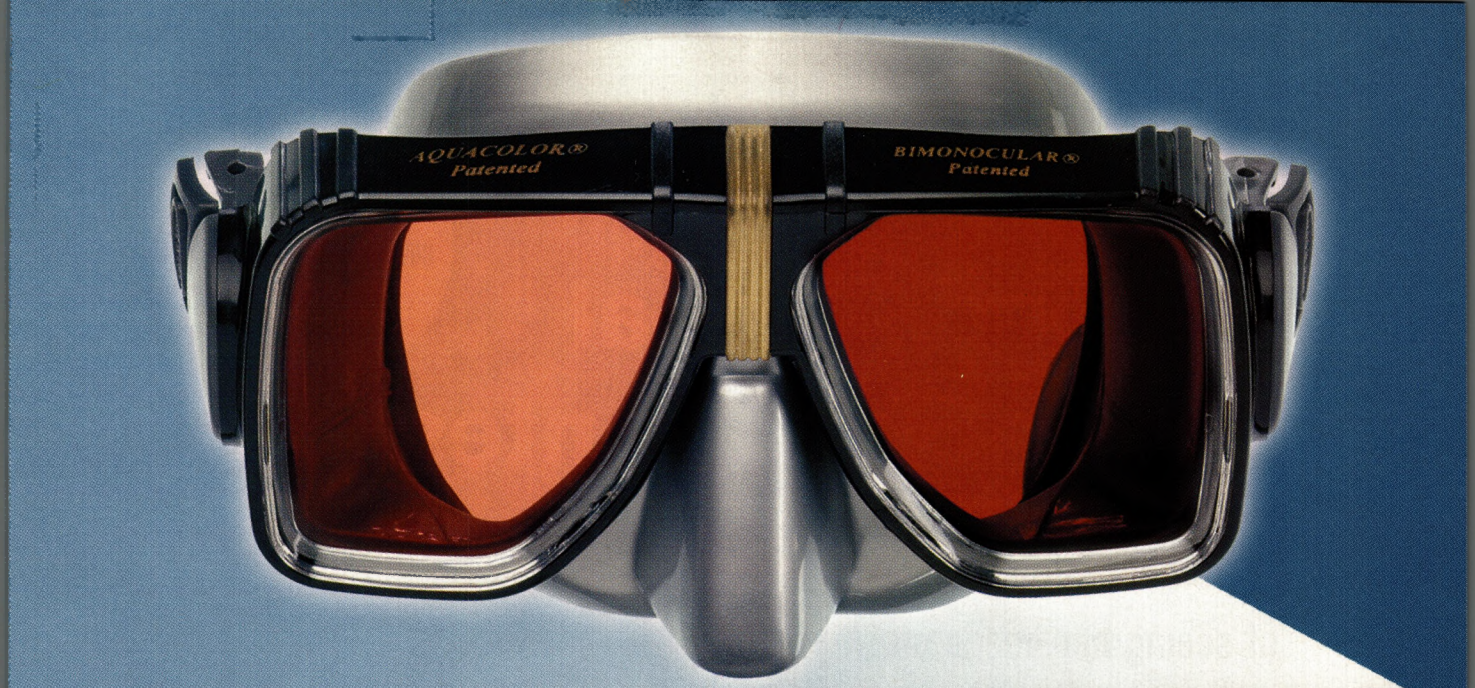
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Contest open to photographers of all levels. The editors of *Skin Diver* will select five finalist images. These images will be posted on *Skin Diver* Online by August 1, 2002, and *Skin Diver* readers will help select the winner. Runner-up photos will be featured in the December 2002 issue.

*For magazines mailed to subscribers only. Grand prize will include a first-time use payment of $800. Each submission becomes property of *Skin Diver* magazine (photos will not be returned). *Skin Diver* is not responsible for lost or damaged submissions. Entries submitted without entry fee will be disqualified.

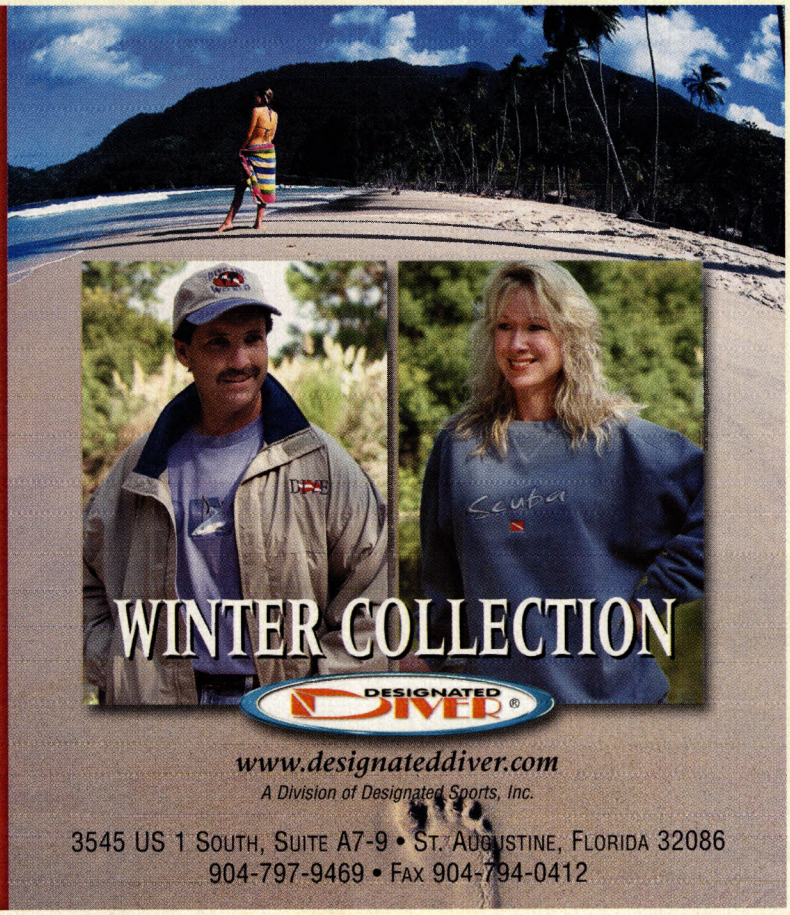




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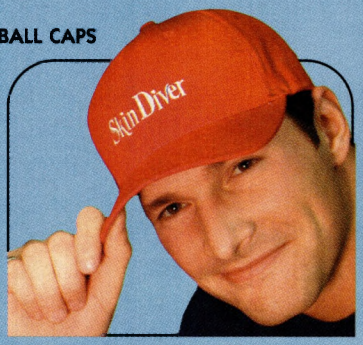
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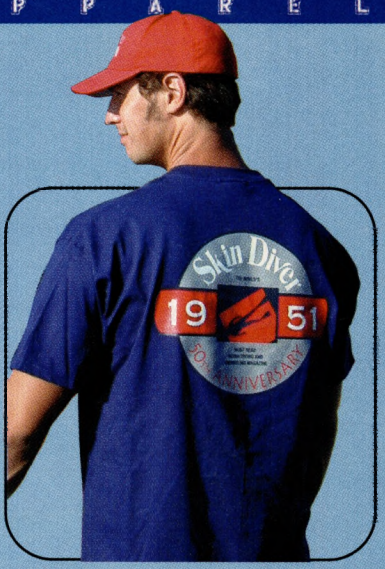
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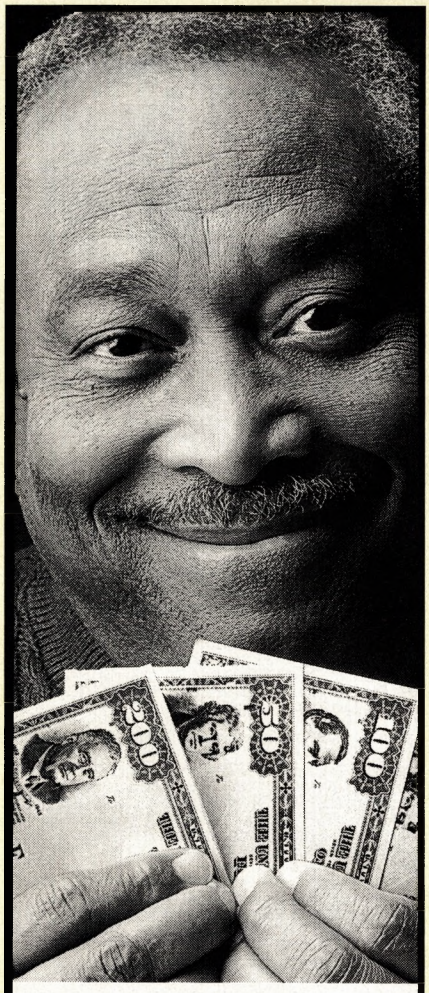


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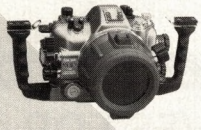
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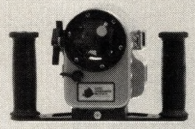
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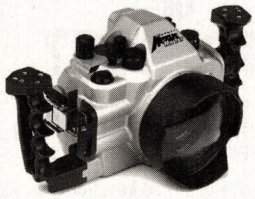
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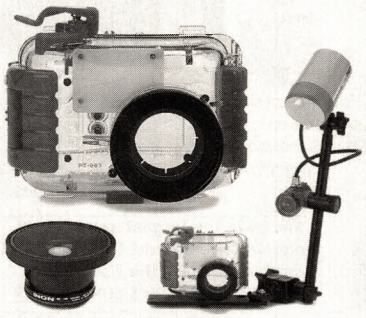
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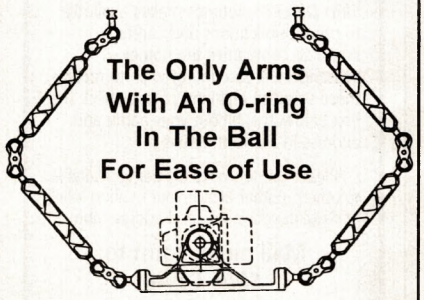
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"Horned Shrimp"

BY DENISE NEILSEN TACKETT AND LARRY TACKETT

NATURE CONTINUES TO DELIGHT ME WITH ITS VARIETY and complexity of design. I always find a new little something to make me smile, like this little shrimp with the big name that refers to its leaf-like jaws and small eye horn. There is very little information available about this shrimp and there's no common name, so I'll call it a "Horned Shrimp."

The Horned Shrimp is tiny, at less than half an inch long. I spotted this one by chance when I was scanning the reef for symbionts. I saw something deep within the folds of a nondescript sponge and photographed it, even though I couldn't find the eyes to focus on. It wasn't until the photos came back that I located them—up on stalks like little periscopes, each one topped with a spine.

Intrigued by this odd little shrimp, I set out to find it again for a better look. This time I was armed with equipment to photograph it at twice life-size (2X) so I could get a better look at it. I found the sponge right away, and after 10 minutes or so, the shrimp put in an appearance. The photo you see here is 2X.

This shrimp is closely related to the Bumblebee and Harlequin Shrimp species known for their characteristically patterned carapaces. Like its relatives, the Horned Shrimp generally occurs in pairs and preys on sea stars, probably via the sea stars' tube feet. I found a reference to its "stinging eyeballs," but was unable to determine whether or not venom glands are associated with the spines. Perhaps it uses the spined eyestalks for defense, although I suppose it could also use them to snag the soft tube feet of its prey, before the sea star is able to withdraw them.

WHERE TO FIND THEM

This species is rarely seen, but sightings have been reported from Okinawa, Japan, Moreton Bay and Lizard Island, Australia, and now from Lembeh Strait, Indonesia.



SCUBAMED

BY FRED BOVE, M.D., PH.D.

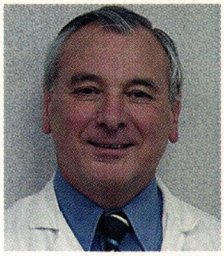
Are Over-the-Counter Medications Safe for Diving?

SOME COMMONLY USED MEDICATIONS THAT might be in your dive bag may include medications for motion sickness, upset stomach, pain, along with decongestants and antibiotics. Except for the antibiotics, all of these medications can be purchased without a prescription, but you should discuss their use with your physician.

Motion Sickness

Motion sickness medications include the antihistamines and the scopolamine patch. Antihistamines also work well as decongestants, so they appear often in divers' travel bags. The older antihistamines that work well for motion sickness (Benadryl, Dramamine, Antivert) can cause drowsiness, and may aggravate the effects of nitrogen narcosis. Newer antihistamines (Allegra, Claritin) cause less drowsiness but may not be as effective in preventing seasickness. In men with mild prostate enlargement, the antihistamines can cause blockage of the urinary tract. This is not a pleasant experience, particularly if you are in a remote location.

The scopolamine patch is usually worn behind the ear and lasts several days, even when diving. Scopolamine can cause disorientation when the patch is used on children or small adults who don't tolerate the dose designed for average-sized adults. Scopolamine will cause dry mouth, and if the medication gets into the eye, the pupil dilates and vision is blurred for several hours. Visual changes can be avoided by taking care not to touch the patch, then rub your eyes. Unequal pupil size is an important finding with brain injury, so the Scopolamine effect on the eye can sometimes be mistaken for a more serious condition.



Decongestants

Antihistamine decongestants have the same precautions as those used for motion sickness. Other decongestants are usually adrenaline-based and constrict blood vessels in membranes of the nose and throat to reduce swelling. They have no problems related to diving. Their use should be approved by your physician because of concerns for people with high blood pressure and heart disease. Nasal sprays may aggravate congestion if used in excess, due to a return of congestion when the spray is not used (rebound phenomenon).

Antibiotics

These medications can be used for traveler's diarrhea, ear or respiratory infections. Cautions with antibiotics include severe sunburn with doxycycline, ciprofloxacin and its relatives. A sunscreen is essential if you are taking one of these antibiotics. Antibiotics in the penicillin or cephalosporin family have no specific problems with diving or with tropical environments. Flagyl is used to prevent certain water-borne stomach infections. It will not interfere with diving, but will cause a severe reaction to alcohol. Drinking alcoholic beverages when you are taking Flagyl should be avoided.

Upset Stomach

These medications usually block the production of stomach acid to relieve heartburn. Upset stomach and heartburn are common when traveling, so bringing Pepcid, Tagamet or a similar medication is reasonable. These medications cause no significant problems with diving or other exposures.

Pain Medications

The over-the-counter medications used for headaches, muscle or joint pain contain ibuprofen (Advil, Motrin), aspirin or acetaminophen (Tylenol). In moderate doses, or with intermittent use, these pose no problems with diving or travel. Aspirin or ibuprofen can cause stomach irritation. More potent anti-inflammatory medications obtained by prescription also cause stomach irritation, but do not interact with diving. I do not recommend narcotic pain medications when diving.

To find more about diving medicine go to www.scubamed.com.

Be aware of the possible side effects of using over-the-counter medications while diving. Misuse may cause problems.



PHOTO: BERNICE GUEVARRA

BY TIFFANY H. CAREY

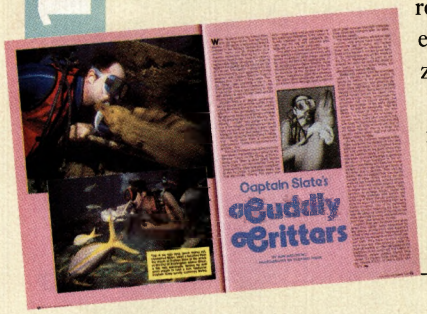
Each month *Skin Diver* looks back through its pages in search of those little nuggets of yesteryear—old equipment, trends of the time, new discoveries—that echo the times and may surprise or shock us. It's good to know your roots and how discoveries of old have helped shape diving of today.

1983

Unfortunate Time Capsule



It was 1983 when Captain Spencer Slate's uncanny ability to befriend and feed wild moray eels and barracuda from his mouth made "Ripley's Believe It or Not." In September of that same year, Ron Nagowski caught up with Captain Slate and went on the now famous feeding adventure: "Time after time, Slate removed his regulator, placed a Ballyhoo in his mouth, and waited motionless while Oscar [a 5-foot barracuda] zoomed by, taking the fish in his gaping jaws."



Although the process of "training" a wild animal is a historical moment itself, the recent talk of banning fish feeding in Florida may result in a saddening "Remember when…" syndrome. And a few relatives of Oscar and Melba (Captain Slate's 6-foot Green Moray friend) are sure to go hungry.

1970

"Dogs and Divers Unwelcome"



Skin Diver writer Bill Montford encountered the sign while vacationing in the Midwest: "Dogs and Divers Unwelcome." After researching the prompt for such disparaging words, Montford wrote a plea to the scuba diver of 1970: "Our image has [been] tarnished…. We are spoilers." He concludes, "[The solution] calls for awareness…and for a study in public relations." At the time, many sites, including the beloved Blue Springs, FL, prohibited divers. In response to the Blue Springs prohibition, divers had snubbed their noses by placing empty beer cans, labeled with their name and date of their dive, in the Springs cavernous walls. A true example of the "spoiling" Montford spoke of.



Fortunately, the call for "awareness and action" was readily met. And for the most part, scuba divers are presently considered an environmentally responsible and mindful group.

1958

Be A Diving Wife—Make Him Like It!



In February 1958, Peggy Marie Walker reported on an overwhelming need to learn more about the sport that seemed to obsess her hubby: scuba diving. So, "While doing my daily chores, [Peggy] looked over the [dive] mags…tried on his rubber suit….[and even] practiced walking around the house in the big awkward flippers." And behold, Peggy unexpectedly developed an interest in diving. Her husband was so pleased, he took her out on his next trip. "Dad [aka: hubby] was so proud," Peggy reported. "I was atmosphere in circulation."



One of the photos accompanying the article shows Peggy studying *Skin Diver*. The caption reads: "A few well-defined tales give a gal conversational knowledge." Just two words: Oh, dear.

I LEARNED

Letting Go in Galapagos

When Kathy and I began our dive at Wolf Island 600 miles off the coast of Ecuador in the far remote northern area of the Galapagos Islands, the conditions were perfect. The sun was out; the water was calm; and visibility was 60-plus feet. We were diving along the face of a vertical cliff that stuck straight up out of the water a good 100 feet and continued down at least 100 feet below the surface. As this was our third dive of the day, all of which were over 100 feet in depth, we were careful to watch our computers.



Kathy was enjoying some White-tip Reef Sharks that exploded out of a cave at about 90 feet as we snuck in to take a look around. I was trying to photograph several big Green Moray Eels sliding in and out of the rocks. As we continued along the wall, the current picked up and it quickly became a drift dive, moving us right along at a pretty good clip. Our divemaster, Fabian, had warned us that at the end of the wall, the current could whip around the point and pull us out into open deep water. We were instructed to stay close to the wall and not get carried out to sea with the current.

The current eventually reached a point that it was ripping. We had to hang onto the rocks to keep from getting sucked away. I was trying to get the lens cover on my camera housing before it got all scratched up on the rocks. I was also trying to hold on to the rocks at the same time. Consequently, I had no free hand to grab my computer to check depth and remaining air.

As I rounded the point, I looked up to see Kathy hanging on with both hands while her body was flapping in the current like a sheet on a clothesline. Her bubbles were blowing away at a right angle, and her eyes were wide. I managed to crawl up to her and motioned with my eyes to let go of the rocks and hold on to me. Then we both released our grip on the rocks and blew off into the blue water.

Now I could finally look at my gauges, and I was shocked to see I only had about 75 pounds of air remaining. Suddenly, the air became very difficult to suck out of my regulator. I had used it all up. I checked our depth and saw we were at 55 feet. I switched to Kathy's octopus regulator and signaled to ascend. We breathed a few breaths off her tank, while kicking toward the surface. Suddenly, her air became hard to breathe. I looked at her air gauge, and it said she had 250 pounds left. (Afterward, we discovered her gauge incorrectly read 200 psi *more* than she actually had.) We were now at 75 feet, and our bubbles were going down! We were caught in a downcurrent and getting deeper.

I looked into Kathy's eyes, said goodbye, and left her with the little air she had remaining. I kicked hard toward the surface with the regulator trailing behind me, exhaling as I went. Aside from briefly buddy breathing with a fellow diver at 50 feet, I continued exhaling and kicking hard for the surface.

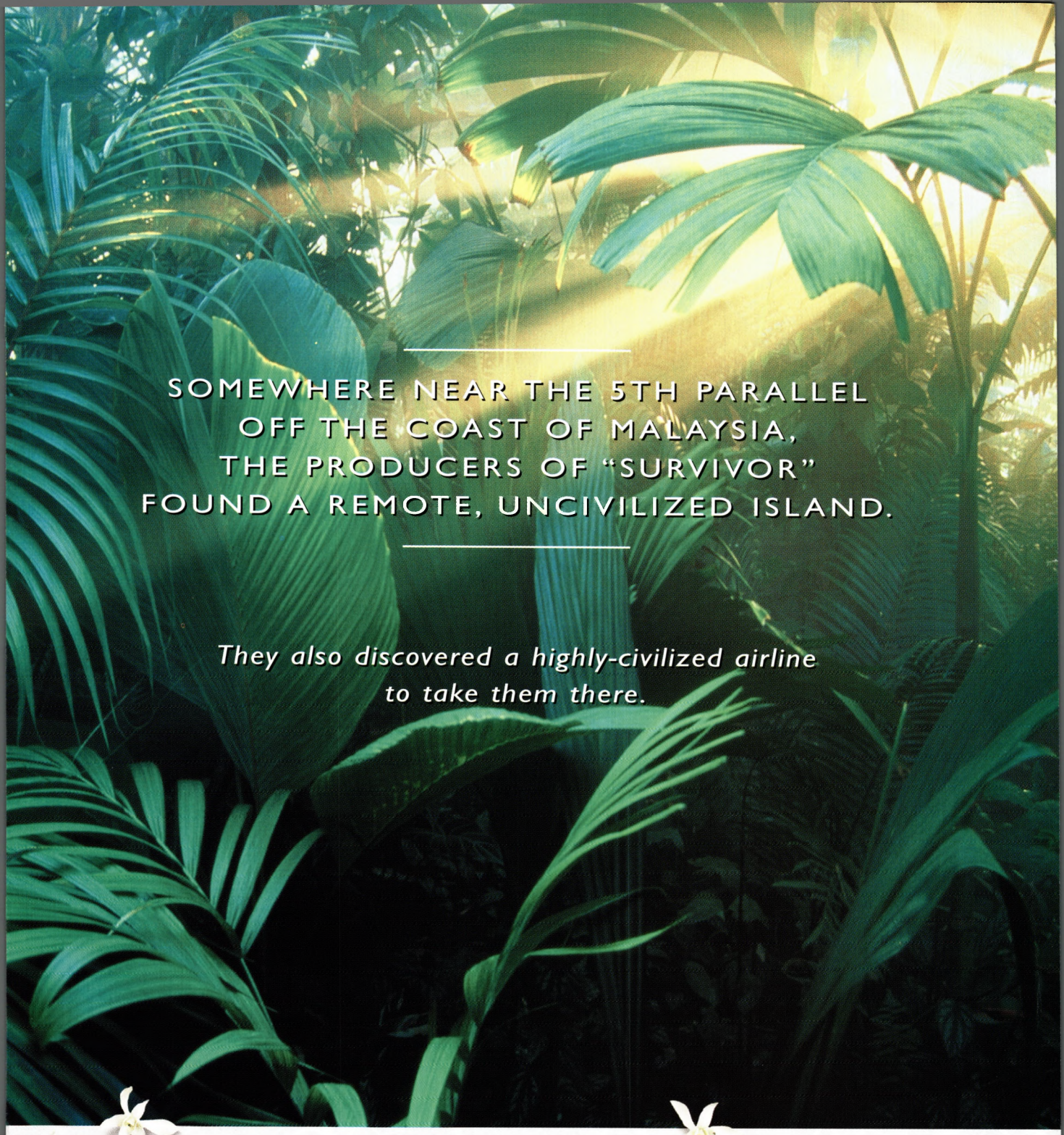
I broke the surface, looking for Kathy. I didn't see her at first. But the crew was dragging her into the inflatable. Kathy lay there, eyes closed. As we arrived to our live-aboard, we got oxygen. Kathy and I went on pure oxygen for about a half-hour. I expected to get bent, but neither of us had any symptoms. —BY ROGER DUNTON

What did I learn?

- ALWAYS watch your pressure gauge, regardless of whatever other equipment you may be carrying.
- When you think you may be in a downcurrent, swim across it and away from the reef.
- If you experience the current picking up, get shallow, do a short safety stop and surface.
- When doing a free ascent, keep the regulator in your mouth— you might get another breath or two out of it as you get shallower.
- Verify there is oxygen available when first boarding any dive boat.

ILLUSTRATION: KIM WILSON BRANDT

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